

Balmy

by molsat

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Summary: [Eret, Hiccup, slash.] "Give yourself some credit," Eret teases, "chief of Berk, you may be new to all of this but your keenness makes up for what great deal of experience you lack." [wip, multichapter fic]

## 1. Chapter 1

Eret, son of Eret, hasn't been acquainted with Hiccup long enough to recognize that the young chief of Berk's conduct has changed. Eret does, however, identify the toll that grief can take on a young man's spirit. Hiccup is friendly towards Eret upon his arrival, albeit a bit wary. Rightfully so, too, Eret mulls. He has been granted his second chance to assume the position of both a rider and a defender of Berk. Only months ago, Eret had the young leader as a temporary intruder on his ship, every kind of sharp weapon aimed at his chest, though Hiccup seemed undaunted by the situation.

The nest that Skullcrusher has prepared for himself, located outside the village, rustles occasionally as the Rumblehorn cozies itself. Skullcrusher takes kindly to Eret but he's still in the process of accepting his full and utmost loyalty so he doesn't sleep in the same home as Eret just yet.

"He likes you," Hiccup comments, a bright smile illuminating his features. "I think you might remind him of my dad."

"Really?" Eret implores, dubiously. "Do I remind you of Stoick the Vast?"

"No way," Hiccup snorts, wrinkling his nose in disgust. Eret knows Hiccup is joking but he still sternly shoves him aside when he makes his way towards Skullcrusher's coiled form, nestled comfortably in a patch of sticks and shrubbery. Hiccup had suggested they find a cave—the more fitting destination for a dragon—for Skullcrusher to reside in but he figures just this night, a nest will suffice.

"I mean, hey," Hiccup continues, concerned that his quip might've instilled legitimate insecurities, "If he can put up with you, then that's good enough for me."

Eret rolls his eyes. He strokes the patch of rough skin behind Skullcrusher's ears and sure enough he begins to grunt and purr softly in appreciation. "You're rather tactless," Eret jeers, lips curling into a perceptive smirk "are you aware?"

Hiccup folds his arms across his chest. This type banter is common between them. Eret has never had a younger brother before but he imagines this is what it would feel like. Though, perhaps 'brotherly' wasn't the right term to describe their unconventional friendship.

"Oh please," Hiccup replies. "Tact is for people who are afraid of speaking their minds. And for people who are, admittedly, not very good at putting things so eloquently. Like me. Yes, I kind of agree with you for once, actually. I don't have a lot of tact."

Eret turns to meet Hiccup's gaze. He chuckles and shakes his head at the flustered Viking. Hiccup scratches the back of his head and smiles docilely. Eret has taken a liking towards the boy, that much is certain.

Eret recalls his own father whenever the silence persists during empty nights like these. He doesn't know which is worse; losing a mother or father at a young age, unable to develop a relationship through the rough patches of young adulthood, or fully obtaining a long-lived bond and then having it snatched from your life all at once. Both selections are agonizing, he thinks. Eret was a mere child when his father grew ill and passed away quietly in his sleep. He loved his father, as natural order deliberated, but there was so much the two should have shared and Eret had so many questions that would remain unanswered.

When the two leave to hurry back to the settlement for dinner, Hiccup's eyes fixate on Skullcrusher's formidable mass. It must hurt, Eret thinks, to have a constant reminder of his father's legacy surround him on a daily basis. Of course, Hiccup would never admit to his father's dragon having any negative bearing on his welfare.

The sullen glance lasts longer than Eret would've expected. So long in fact, that Eret was tempted to ask Hiccup if he would like a moment alone but Hiccup diverts his glance, offers Eret a watery smile, and dashes along the path.

It isn't terribly often the two will share an evening of drinking together. Hiccup spends most of his days taking care of the village and more recently, concocting a plan to ensure that food is stored properly before winter arrives.

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><p>Currently, the two are seated in the dining hall, sipping goblets filled to the brim with mead. Hiccup is narrating a fond memory of his father and his story is accompanied with drunken, wild hand gestures and that awkward slump his shoulders make. Eret tries to ignore how wide Hiccup's shoulder blades are for his otherwise

lissome frame.<p>

"I was a stupid kid and I mean, maybe I still am."

Toothless shoves his muzzle into Hiccup's side, a forthcoming gesture that implies he thinks his rider is giving himself too much credit.

"Okay fine," Hiccup mumbles, shooting Toothless a frown before he continues, "I definitely still am."

"Give yourself some credit," Eret teases, "chief of Berk, you may be new to all of this but your keenness makes up for what great deal of experience you lack."

"Gee," Hiccup retaliates, "Tell me how you really feel."

"I feel that I've never given you my proper condolences." Eret admits. "My father died when I was quite young. Younger than you, even."

Hiccup raises an eyebrow. "How young are we talking here?"

"Nine," Eret divulges.

"Ouch," Hiccup mutters. He shifts uncomfortably in his seat. Eret doubts Hiccup has opened up to anyone about these matters as of late.

"I behaved a lot like you did when my father died," Eret continues. "Haughty, moody, stubborn, unwilling to follow ordersâ€|"

"Okay, first of all," Hiccup protests, sitting upright in his chair, "You're only what, five years older than me?"

Hiccup points a reproving index finger at Eret. Eret stifles his laughter. He doesn't doubt that Hiccup has an unyielding and authoritative side to himâ€"the side he's sure was passed down from Stoickâ€"but his drunken upheaval doesn't do him any justice.

"Secondly," Hiccup scolds, "You're always haughty, moody stubborn and unwilling to follow orders and I'm sure those traits were ascribed to you since the day you were born."

Hiccup's accusing finger hangs in midair as he pauses to take a gracious gulp of mead. A tiny sliver of the sweet drink trickles out of the corner of his mouth. Eret follows the drip with his eyes. The trail ebbs down the young man's chin and then makes it's way down his pale, freckled neck. When Eret gulps, he feels a knot twisting in the back of his throat.

"As I was saying," Hiccup commences, "You are all of those things and I am not. That was the initial point I was trying to make. Although I don't know why I was trying to make it in the first place. I forgot why I got mad. Oops."

Hiccup giggles and stuffs his fist in his mouth in order to still his uncharacteristically childish glee. Eret's face is etched in sheer amusement.

"I think you've had more than enough to drink tonight," Eret reprimands. Not many Viking leaders are reduced to this altitude of inane giggle fits. But Hiccup isn't like most Viking leaders.

Eret moves to Hiccup's side of the table and offers to help him up.

"I'm fine," he says. Hiccup stumbles and falls backwards. Toothless attempts to nudge him forward, hoping that Eret will catch his fall.

"Whoa!" Eret laughs as Hiccup's body collapses into his. "Not as tough as you think you are."

"Oh shut up," Hiccup grumbles, grasping at Eret's biceps to hoist himself upright. It proves to be a painfully awkward moment because Hiccup is clutching Eret's arms and he's pressed firmly against Eret's strapping torso. Eret doesn't particularly dislike the lanky build squashed against his. Hiccup is warm and his hair smells like sweat and for some reasons, peaches. Who knew, with this boy.

Hiccup must've sensed that their proximity was prolonged for quite some time because he clears his throat. Toothless watches Eret apprehensively, eyes narrowing into tiny slits, not out of concern, but out of curiosity.

"I think I'm okay now," Hiccup mumbles.

"Right," Eret agrees.

Toothless allows Hiccup to lean on his weight. The boy and his Night Fury exit the dining hall. Eret sits down, sighs, and buries his head in his folded arms.

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><p>The two never discuss that night. Eret prays that Hiccup thinks nothing of it. A few days later, Eret makes his way towards the plaza, where Hiccup's home is located. He carries a crate filled with newly sharpened tools. Hiccup asked to look at them before they were placed in stock, so he could agree that they were up to par. Eret didn't see the point in being so meticulous but he knows better than to argue.<p>

He saunters his way down the route, greeting townsfolk on the way. "Good morning, Ruffnut," he greets. Ruffnut is seated idly on a log, lacing up her boots.

"Ech. Been there, done that, over it," she drones, rolling her eyes.

Eret knows she's referring to the one-time-romp they had a while back, but he isn't at all staggered to see that she's misread his intentions. When Eret reaches his destination, he gently places the crate at Hiccup's front door. There's a sudden holler coming from inside.

He can't make out what's being said but the voice belongs to Hiccup. Another voice pipes up "Valka's" and then finally the sound of

stomping feet. Hiccup exits the front door, slamming it as loudly as he can, then scurries off, without acknowledging Eret's presence. Eret only sees Hiccup's face for a split second and the young chief is livid. He watches Hiccup disappear into the horizon, craving the audacity to call after him.

"Wow." Hiccup remarks, a little breathlessly. "Not bad for an amateur."

Hiccup leans against Toothless, the look on his face a bit too smug for Eret's liking. Eret manages a steady landing and he and Skullcrusher emit a whirlwind of dust when their masses hit the ground. It's true that Eret is new to the ways of a rider, but he feels Hiccup's comment was unwarranted.

"Give me some time," Eret teases, pompously, "and I'll surpass you."

He removes his helmet and it hits the ground with a thud. "Doubtful," Hiccup derides. "But I appreciate your keenness. It makes up for your lack of experience."

Hiccup looks immensely pleased with himself. Eret wonders whether he admires Hiccup's tenacity or if it makes his blood boil to be outwitted by a man not nearly as bodily intimidating as himself. The way he speaks sometimes, you would've thought Hiccup was the same sizable combatant his father once was. "I've completed most of your obstacles." Eet claims, stepping forward.

"Yes, you have," Hiccup chirrups.

"So what does it take to earn the approval from the chief of Berk?"

"Can you jump off your dragon in midair and freefall without dying?"

"No."

"Well, then, there you go," Hiccup vexes, placing his hands on his hips. Toothless snickers alongside his rider, wings furling in satisfaction. Eret inches closer toward Hiccup until they're toe to toe. Hiccup stands his ground, chest puffed out, head held high. He's still smiling despite the fact that Eret's body is soaring over his.

Hiccup's ascendancy wavers a bit when Eret sizes him up and drinks him in. Eret's eyes focus on Hiccup's metal peg leg; they then make their up his lean torso, armor clad chest, and then back to his fair features. Eret is fortunate that Hiccup can't hear his heart pounding furiously against his ribcage.

"Uh, just some friendly competition, Hiccup promises nervously, "Can I help you with something else or..?"

"No need," Eret answers, backing away slowly, smirking. "I think I ought to give consideration to your challenge."

He adjusts Skullcrusher's saddle before embarking on his return to the village. He wants to savor this moment. He chooses not to look

back to see Hiccup's reaction.

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><p>The dining hall is empty around this late hour but Eret has been working by the docks for a majority of the day and he hasn't had a chance to help himself to a proper meal. He's startled when Hiccup emerges from the entrance, scuttling past him before he has the chance to say hello.<p>

When he grabs a fresh bowl of porridge, he notices Valka sitting at a table, gazing at nothing or no one in particular, chin resting glumly in her palm. "Good evening, Valka," he address her, warmly.

Valka snaps out of whatever thoughts consume her solemn state of mind and she says, "Yes, Eret, of course, it's nice to see you. Come, sit down," she motions to the empty bench adjacent to hers.

"I'm sorry if I seem out of sorts," Valka explains, offering a kind yet pained smile, "I'm afraid my son is rather disturbed lately."

Eret nods. More or less, this was Valka's polite way of saying her son was acting like a hormonal wreck.

"No need to elaborate, I figure I already know what ails the boy."

Valka laughs gently, her voice light and airless. "You speak as though you're twice his age."

She shakes her head and adds, "Yes, he handled my husband's death with such grace and I suppose after Berk quieted down, that's when he had time to truly process what had happened."

Valka pokes at the food on her dish absentmindedly and explains, "When there's quiet, there's room to feel. As long as you keep yourself occupied, so long as there's no strife to distract you, there's always room to feel. I would know, I've lived twenty years in silence."

Eret remembers the night they spent together when Hiccup stopped to stare at his father's former dragon.

"You put it so eloquently." Eret contemplates. " I wasn't too different from Hiccup when my father died."

"I'm terribly sorry for your loss," Valka confides. It's a response Eret has heard far too many times but it sounds sincere coming from Valka.

"No worries," Eret assures, "I didn't have the weight of the world on my shoulders like he does."

"Aye," Valka sighs, "That he does."

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><p>It's becoming increasingly difficult to focus with Hiccup nearby. There's an unresolved tension permeating the air when the two are in

one another's company: tension thick enough to be cut with an axe. Neither of the two is exceptionally gifted in the art of communication.<p>

Hiccup isn't hostile. He is, however, quick to remove himself from conflict. Valka had explained later on in their exchange that Hiccup was offered the role as chief before the battle of the Bewilderbeasts took place. Hiccup hadn't uttered a word, to his father. Instead, he ran away, in the most literal sense, and spent the remainder of his day on a remote island.

Valka lamented that her son keeps pushing people away and it isn't like him at all. He has fought with Valka numerous times and he's argued with his girlfriend, Astrid, the blonde rider. Astrid would've made a fine suitor, Valka had divulged, but now she's not sure of the young couple were even speaking to one another anymore. In fact, no one knew of the current affair of their relationship.

Eret is beginning to understand Hiccup's nature but strangely enough, it doesn't dissuade his fascination.

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><p>Hiccup starts to confide in Eret when it comes to his authoritative duties. Eret doesn't imagine his advice can be that novel but Hiccup certainly thinks otherwise. Recently, Eret explained that the onset of winter was making it difficult to harvest crops, thus resulting in the current food shortage and the solution was simple: just assemble a group of dragons to capture fish and that should suffice for the time being.<p>

("I'm terrible at my job," Hiccup had wailed, "Why didn't I think of that?"

>Eret pat him clumsily on the shoulder.)<p>

Now, there was a knock on his door. He opens the front door of his crowded hut to see Hiccup grinning madly, his eyes ample with anticipation and Eret is sure he's bouncing up and down just ever so faintly, like a toddler.

In his arms, he holds thick folds of woven cloth and leather. "Guess what?" Hiccup twitters, brushing past Eret and forcing himself inside.

Skullcrusher is taking a nap by the fireplace (he finally warmed up to Eret and is now taking up far too much space in their tiny home) and the sudden racket of scampering footsteps and the slam of a door displeases him. The Rumblehorn grumbles in aggravation.

"You've grown that extra three inches you've been hoping for?"

"Frankly," Hiccup shoots back, "I could live without your snide remarks. But, I'm in a good mood today so I'll let it slide."

Hiccup drops the materials in his arms atop Eret's table and he smoothens them out, arranging them so they line up just right. "You barged into my home to show me that you're making new clothes?" Eret inquires. "I'm fascinated, tell me more."

"No," Hiccup corrects him, holding up a lean cut of leather by the corners, "I'm making you a suit."

"Oh."

"Oh," Eret says again, smacked with realization. "A suit for flying. I didn't think you'd go through with supporting that notion. Honestly, I was bluffing at the time."

"Oh, I knew you were bluffing," Hiccup goads. "There's no way you could outdo the dragon master."

Eret's eyes roll far up into his skull.

"On the other hand," Hiccup adds, "Berk could use more fearless, free falling dragon riders so I took it upon myself to—" he hoists up the fabric and chuckles it at Eret, who catches it with ease—"decide that I shall take you under my wing and show you the wonders of my expertise."

Hiccup then reaches into the compartment of his glove and pulls out a collection of pins between his fingertips. "Hold still," Hiccup orders. "Lift your arms up. Yeah like that, good."

Hiccup offers Eret a toothy grin and says, "I don't have any exact measurements so I just used whatever fits me and I kind of doubled the length, by a lot, because you're, you know—"

"Tall, strong, burly, muscular, and dangerously handsome?"

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. Taller and bigger than me, yes."

Hiccup pays no heed to Eret's triumphant, cocky smile. He wraps the comically large hide of leather around Eret's bulky arms, his chest, and his thighs, securing the material snugly with the pins.

"I think I have an idea of how wide it needs to be," Hiccup says.

"You're quite the innovator," Eret compliments.

"Thanks. You know me, not a lot of brawn but plenty of brains. For the most part."

Hiccup steps a few paces backward in order to survey his measurements. "In addition to the leather that's there to protect you from the cold, I'm jotting down some sketches so I can figure out how I'm going to fit the wing on your back."

After Hiccup deducts that he'll know where to go from there, he begins unwrapping the leather from Eret's stature, glowing with enthusiasm.

"This is awfully thoughtful of you," Eret jives. "Have I done anything to warrant this generosity? Or am I growing on you sooner than you would've thought?"

The corners of his lips curl upward, more deviously than he intended. Hiccup unfolds the final layer of leather from Eret's arm and slings it over his shoulder. His focus shifts to the smarmy, physically



arresting man towering over him. Eret is pleased to see the younger rider is blushing. His cheeks are colored with bashful hues of red and pink, his lips taut.

"Like I said," Hiccup falters, "I just want to share my knowledge with someone else."

Without thinking, Eret places a firm hand on Hiccup's bony shoulder and says, "Thank you."

"Um, You're welcome," Hiccup replies.

Eret notices Hiccup's bangs are too messy for his inclination, so he reaches to touch the tangled mess of locks, hoping to brush them from his eyes. Eret pauses, realizing what he's about to do, and a stark chill of mortification travels through his bloodstream, rendering him clammy and disarrayed. He must look incredibly stupid standing there, stunted, his hand raised in the air while he tries to figure out an excuse for bringing his gestures so closely to Hiccup's face.

"You have something in your hair," Eret lies.

"I, uh, I'll take care of that then, I guess. Later, I mean." Hiccup says, confused, probably seeing right through Eret's blatant cover up but there's a touch of authenticity in his voice and Eret will just have to rely on that small window of faith. When Hiccup leaps out Eret's door, too excited with his latest creations to be troubled by Eret's ineptitude, Eret sits down by the fireplace to join his sleeping, horned acquaintance.

"You heard and saw nothing today," Eret exhales loudly to Skullcrusher, scratching his Rumblehorn's neck. Skullcrush growls and Eret doesn't understand whatever language Dragons speak but he's sure whatever's been said is pretty judgmental.

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><p>"Perhaps you could speak with him?" Valka pleaded earlier today. "He looks up to you."<p>

Valka had fought with her son and Hiccup stormed off to what she suggested was the arena. The arena was only busy during the day for dragon training. Eret groans as he makes his way towards the monumental dome. He had a soft spot for mothers and he's confident they're all aware, especially Valka.

The gate to the dome's entrance is wide open. Hiccup is pacing angrily around a crate of tools, aided by his Night Fury. Toothless follows his trail, attempting to console him by nuzzling his face into the crook of his owner's neck. The dragon's efforts are fruitless, so the discouraged being sulks, curls up at Hiccup's side, and proceeds to survey his anguished friend.

"Wait here, boy," Eret whispers to Skullcrusher. His dragon obeys, seating himself steadily on his haunches as Eret makes his presence known. Eret slips through the gate just as Hiccup picks up a dagger and throws it furiously at the closest target. He manages to miss the target and the dagger hits the wall meters away.

"You have terrible aim," Eret says, lengthening his palm towards

Toothless. Toothless's anxious disposition calms. Eret isn't quick enough to yank his hand away in time. The Night Fury's tongue darts forward to courteously lick his hand. Eret grimaces and he tightened his mouth as Toothless unleashes a slimy, wet greeting kiss on his skin. He's in a forgiving mood so he forces Toothless a grateful smile.

"Another jab at my less than imposing performance," Hiccup snaps, "Thank you. Just what I need."

Eret yields, elevating his hands in jest and says, "I come on peaceful terms."

Hiccup rolls his eyes and heaves an exasperated breath. "I'm guessing my mother sent you."

"What makes you say that?"

Hiccup pivots angrily, crossing his arms against his chest, knuckles white, squeezed in a firm, defiant grip, and nostrils flared. Hiccup's rigid and guarded posture indicates that he is a wild, wounded dragon, best approached with caution.

He is fuming and Eret has never seen Hiccup so irate during the course of their alliance. The younger man's eyes are bloodshot and they're paired with weary, darkened and circular bags that reveal lack of proper rest. Hiccup must've been crying earlier, from the looks of it, but Eret is already facing apprehension so he ignores further observation.

"Well," Hiccup begins, his brows wrinkling and undulating, the sneer curling at the crease of his mouth, "I've lived twenty years without a mother but I'm pretty sure I know how mothers work by now."

Eret arches an eyebrow in disbelief. "I'm sure you could treat your mother with a bit more respect. She's worried about you."

"Oh," Hiccup dotes, sarcastically, "You're absolutely right! You go on ahead and do exactly what my mother is expecting. Hereâ€" Hiccup rushes furiously towards Eret and yanks his arm. Eret stumbles but manages to sustain his balance.

"Come closer, let me cry on your shoulder. You can talk me out of my tantrum, give me some heartwarming advice, and we can go home, arms linked, side by side, like the great pals that we are, as if nothing happened and everything is just peachy."

Eret retches from Hiccup's grip, twisting his arm free, scowling incredulity.

"I've barely uttered a word and look at you, you're acting likeâ€" Eret shakes his head "- a brat. It's not very becoming for someone like you."

"Oh," Hiccup snarls, balling his fists, "don't start."

"I didn't come here to argue," Eret exclaims, "Can you calm down and at least tell me what you're so upset about?"

Hiccup turns his head to the side, indifferently. "It's none of your

business," he answers.

"Unbelievable," Eret scoffs. He rubs his temple and dedicates a moment to serious contemplation; should he just leave? There doesn't seem to be much point in reasoning with Hiccup while he's in this state. Eret was well informed by both his parents and even Astrid that Hiccup is a persistent one, but gods have mercy. He looks to Toothless, who has enveloped his wings around his body to shield himself from the outburst.

"Hiccup," Eret tries again, relaxing his shoulders, "I'm your friend. I can see your hurting and after all you've done for me, let me at least help you."

Hiccup's features soften from those words and there's a lovely twinkle in his irises, as though he's too drained to smile with his mouth so his eyes are smiling for him. The fondness resonates as he continues to speak.

"It's stupid family stuff and I don't want to get anyone else involved in it," Hiccup mutters. He's guarded himself again, not just physically—“with his arms not hugging his torso”—but emotionally as well.

"Fine," Eret hisses, "But it seems to me that your solution to everything is to ensure that no one gets involved and that doesn't seem to be working in your favor."

"What are you taking about?" Hiccup sneers, any lasting vulnerability now evaporating from his demeanor.

"You know exactly what I'm talking about," Eret states. He straightens his posture, unabashed, staring Hiccup in the eye.

Eret wants to verbalize the significance of the bond they've been forming but Eret allows room for silence. He permits Hiccup the chance to assert himself. Hiccup merely shrugs and says, "I don't know."

There's an uneasy lurch in the pit of Eret's gut. Of course Hiccup knows. "I'm getting a little tired of your cowardice," Eret growls.

He's somewhat regretful of how harsh his accusations sound but he's losing his patience.

"Wh—" Hiccup's eyes widen, his jaw drops, and he sputters, "What? First I'm a brat and now I'm a coward? You're really having at it, aren't you? Go on, get it out of your system."

Eret counters, "You're a coward. Every time something goes wrong, you run away. You literally run away from your problems. It's pathetic."

Hiccup's face turns to an unusual and vibrant shade of red and purple. "You—" Hiccup stutters. Eret holds his ground, waiting for Hiccup to strike back with the aptitude that's made him so renowned.

"— Would a coward do this?"

Hiccup tugs at Eret's fur collar and their bodies crush simultaneously. Hiccup molds his weight into Eret's. Eret doesn't even have an instant to blink before Hiccup gracelessly presses their lips together. Eret's body freezes and he isn't sure if he's terrified or elated but a cold sweat permeates every inch of his skin. Eret's eyes remain open and he sees Hiccup's eyes are screwed shut.

An electric jolt snaps within him when Hiccup's timid, chaste pressing of lips delves into something Eret didn't know Hiccup was capable of. He hastily shoves his tongue into the older man's mouth and Eret can sense that Hiccup doesn't quite know what he's getting himself into because his muscles stiffen for a handful of seconds and his tongue is suspended limply, unsure how to probe itself into an accurate ministration.

Eret relieves Hiccup of his diffidence by tracing his hand along the small of the boy's back and then pushing him forward until the willowy form is aligned with his as securely as can be. Hiccup releases a tiny whimper when Eret licks the roof of his mouth, his chest expanding from the strange but gratifying sensation.

Eret prays to the gods that the natural response to an enticing kiss like this doesn't take effect just yet. He's certain the boy has kissed before but he's not convinced he's experienced in any sort of deeper intimacy, let alone with a man. Hiccup delivers another diminutive gasp when Eret sucks lightly on the young leader's tongue.

Hiccup's hands hang uncertainly by his sides and he sluggishly levitates them so they rest against Eret's shoulders. Kissing Hiccup was everything he thought it would be and everything he never knew he needed. Hiccup's lips were warm and supple. His body was lean and it arched perfectly into his touches.

Hiccup's hands caress and explore the expansive, masculine shapes of Eret's attributes. His nimble fingers graze his collarbones and the thick hairs along his chest.

It takes every ounce of willpower for Eret not to picture Hiccup sprawled out hungrily across his bed. Images of Hiccup staring up at him with pleading eyes, tousled hair, and a crooked, bashful smile do not cloud his thoughts. At least they don't until Hiccup outright moans into his mouth and then suddenly Eret's livelihood shatters -like a mirror does when it hits the ground and breaks into thousands of tiny pieces- and suddenly hypothetical Hiccup in Eret's imagination is moaning around something that is certainly not Eret's mouth.

Not surprisingly, Hiccup yelps when Eret's growing arousal pokes him in the abdomen. He breaks away from the kiss, reeling backwards as if he's stepped on a snake.

"I'm sorry," Eret heaves, shamefacedly. "I'm sorry. I haven'tâ€|been close to someone like that in a while."

"I-I, uh, can't believeâ€|I just did that. I don't know why I did that," Hiccup murmurs.

Eret's mouth is caked with dehydration so when he tries to gulp, he only swallows the thickness of the air. His voice cracks when he attempts to console his friend. "Grief, uh, has strange effects on people," he offers. He's not entirely sure if what he's saying is meant to quell Hiccup's or his own anxieties.

"Did I really just do that?" Hiccup stutters rhetorically, his erratic hand movements emphasizing his bewilderment, "Did I just kiss you? My friend?"

Hiccup repeats, "No, no, no," in a helpless mantra, hands covering his face, shielding himself from Eret as much as possible.

"Why did I do that? What was I thinking?" Hiccup blubbers frantically.

"Stress leads people to make unlikely choices, as well," Eret adds, weakly, feeling as though his knees could give out and his body will sink into the ground, hopefully never to resurface. "You've clearly been stressed, I assume. I mean, you won't tell me why, exactly."

"I need to go," Hiccup croaks, hobbling for his Night Fury, prodding it's side in urgent fashion. Toothless gives Eret a quizzical expression before he's hauled away and Eret returns the dragon a sorrowful glimpse that reads, "hell if I know, friend."

"Hiccup," Eret sighs, biting his lip. Nothing he can say will persuade him to stay but Eret can at least try. The sight of a frenzied, emotionally compromised Hiccup and his night fury scurrying off into the distance has become so common to Eret, it may as well be a part of his weekly regime.

## 2. Chapter 2

Days pass and Eret has not heard nor seen Hiccup. This sort of evasion isn't peculiar and it doesn't strike Eret as something he should take too personally. Undeniably, Berk's young chief has been subjected to emotional turmoil that Eret wouldn't wish upon his worst enemies (that's not true at all, he'd wish even worse upon Drago but that's beside the point.)

Nevertheless, the rejection is still a hornet's stinger piercing his susceptible flesh. No, the rejection is a swarm of hornets attacking him all at once, rendering him immobile and agonized. Perhaps that's a bit exaggerative, but Eret can handle rejection; it was the rejection followed by Hiccup's refusal to communicate that ailed him.

Hiccup can't last long, he hopes. Eventually, he'll have to confront Eret. Eret just hopes it soon because Hiccup won't leave his thoughts, no matter how hard he tries to fight the intrusive pining. Hiccup's crooked, goofy smile, the way his green eyes light up when he's excited, the overall feeling of completeness that surrounds the young man's aura when he's one with the wind and sky, the way it brings out beautiful and forthcoming traits that qualify him to be a leader; a protector.

Today, Eret has been ordered to carry and unload supplies on the docks. Skullcrusher circles the procession of ships from above,

shrieking blissfully while his body twists and turns through the heavy fog. Eret boards yet another ship in order to survey the crates and barrels filled with supplies obtained through trade (another village to the east, though Eret isn't familiar with Berk's neighboring domains).

It's odd to set foot on a boat for only a brief amount of time during the day when he had lived on a vessel for months. Nevertheless, he maneuvers the craft with ease, as if nothing has changed and he recalls the nooks and crannies of any ship's essentials. He gazes at the ship's mast, standing proud and unabashed. He notices the mast's wood is deteriorating, bits and pieces torn from the ruthless rain and winds. He'll have to explain to Hiccup about the ship's condition.

A loose rope hoisted by the mast swivels and brushes freely against the weary pole. Eret remembers that the first time he met Hiccup, the boy heroically leaped off his snarling Night Fury, jumped into the air, gripped a swinging rope from his ship's mast, and swung himself to land on the deck.

Eret would have never guessed that the tall, long-limbed rider of Berk would outsmart him. Honestly, he didn't know what to think when the supposed dragon master introduced himself but the last speculation he could offer was that the son of Stoick the Vast would be soft, pliable, and scrawny with a wild, contrasting sense of confidence, brilliance and allure.

Eret catches himself revering Hiccup again so he frowns, begins unpacking the traded goods, and hopes the menial tasks will alter his focus.

\* \* \*

><p>Nighttime approaches and Eret hauls his fatigued, drooping stature back to his home. Skullcrusher trots alongside him with far too much vivacity than Eret can handle at this hour. His arms are sore from lifting heavy equipment but at least he can maintain his muscular build at this rate. He can't necessarily complain when people admire his good looks, even if has earned him compromising position in the past.<p>

When Eret reaches his destination, he nearly forgets to close the door behind him. Skullcrusher slams the front door shut with a swift whip of his broad tail.

"Thank you, boy," Eret credits his dragon. He slips off his boots, removes his shirt and drifts into a peaceful slumber but the following morning, he awakes with dampened sheets and a frantic throb between his legs.

Eret grunts in frustration

He had dreamt about Hiccup and it was a gorgeous and enticing whirl of vivid projections that he wishes hadn't ended so tersely. The next encounter he shares with Hiccup is certainly going to be a painfully discomfited one. Eret wonders if he'll be able to separate Hiccup's green eyes from dream world Hiccup's half lidded, lustful and glazed eyes.

Eret shifts restlessly under a pile of heavy blankets. It's still quite early and the sun hasn't risen yet so Eret debates whether or not he should fall asleep or take care of his pending excitement.

Detailed illustrations of Hiccup underneath his own impressive weight resonate powerfully in his drowsy state of mind. In his visions, the youthful chief had playfully tugged the fur shawl draped around Eret's shoulders, pulling him close kissing him shyly; not at all with the same force he assumed in reality.

And this time, in Eret's perfect world that had been interrupted far too soon, Eret was the one hastily mashing their greedy mouths together. Hiccup had wrapped his thin legs around Eret's waist, gasping softly when Eret carried them both towards the foot of the bed and then dropped Hiccup's clawing, entangled form atop wrinkled sheets.

Eret fumbles, tosses, and turns, trying to find a comfortable position that will allow him much needed rest. His erection swells frantically as he visualizes the boy's face pressed into the sheets, the fabrics muffling his curious moans and whimpers. His hand disappears under the wool covers and he almost lets out a sigh of relief when his hand begins to stroke his aching member. When he comes, he tries to picture the type of delicious noises that Hiccup would make in the throes of ecstasy.

\* \* \*

><p>"Mind if I join you, Chief?"<p>

Ere carries two goblets he had just poured with mead, standing adjacent to Hiccup. The dining hall has cleared out since Hiccup has been here. Hiccup slouches in his seat, neck craned downwards. He jolts upright and is greeted with Eret's towering silhouette.

It's been the first time in days since he's been graced with Hiccup's attendance. He wants to be angry but that desire diminishes almost immediately. He's just too damn happy to see the bumbling idiot. Thoughts of Hiccup naked, writhing, sweating, and groaning are put to rest in the meantime. It's a sacrifice he's willing to make.

"Oh," Hiccup squeaks.

Eret's wrist hits the end of the table and he slides the glass of mead across the table. It parks flawlessly at Hiccup's fingertips, not a drip or spill to be seen. Eret is quite proud of his impeccable reflexes (and this was just one of his many suave maneuvers.)

"I'm not here to argue," Eret says, positioning himself opposite of the table, "You can talk when you want to. I just thought you could use a drink."

"I'm sorry," Hiccup blubbers erratically, "I know I should have said something sooner but- I meanâ€"where do I even begin? Oh gods, what a mess."

He buries his heads in his folded arms.

"This is certainly taking a toll on your conscience," Eret

snorts.

"Gee, how perceptive of you."

"Now that you mention my perceptiveness, where is your scaly friend? I almost didn't recognize you without your dragon hovering about."

"Asleep," Hiccup mumbles, his head rising faintly, chin resting glumly on his wrists. "Like I should be."

Eret lifts the mug of mead and takes a long, hearty gulp. He smacks the goblet atop the wooden table's surface with a loud \_thwack\_. Luckily, it's enough to encourage Hiccup to mimic his gesticulations. Hiccup swallows a mouthful of the tasty liquid and he spills a bit on the tabletop and on his chest. Sleep deprivation does not make for a nimble demonstration, much to Hiccup's dismay. Eret chews at the top of his lip to thwart himself from snickering.

"You can't isolate yourself from everyone, Hiccup," Eret rebukes. "Especially Toothless. It's not like you."

Hiccup's narrows his eyes in dissent until he decides that resentment takes up far too much of his already dwindling energy.

"In my defense," Hiccup retorts, "Do you really know me well enough to know that I'm doing something that's not 'like me'?"

"You raise an excellent point," Eret responds. "But I think I've had an idea about the kind of person you are, ever since the day you forced your way onto my ship, waving around that strange, fiery sword of yours."

"It's not a sword, it's a- never mind, I've explained it to you before and I'm not going to waste my time. You're hopeless."

Hiccup is straightening his posture, his now illuminated features producing a glimpse of bewilderment and a vague, reddish flush that signals his intoxication from the mead. It's just enough to render him tipsy and it's probably for the best if he doesn't indulge unless he wants to pass out right here in the dining hall.

Hiccup continues, "What exactly did you think about me when you first met me? I know you weren't exactly pleased with my entrance. Personally, I thought it was rather dashing but heyâ€" Hiccup shrugs immodestly- "that's just me."

"I thought you were a smug brat for daring to set foot on my ship with the guarantee that you could change Drago's mind about dragons."

"Again with the name calling."

"You never did change his mind but you certainly changed mine. I'm grateful for that."

Hiccup's is beaming enough to brighten the otherwise dimly lit atmosphere of the silenced hall. Eret fixates on the striking lad's crooked teeth. They're adorable, though Hiccup might disagree.



"I'm sorry I blew up at you like that," Hiccup apologizes, abruptly. The yearning to make amends must have been bubbling uncontrollably, just as deeply as it was for Eret. "The whole thing was stupid. You were only trying to help me and I took out my anger on you."

"You're forgiven. I don't suppose you'll tell me what you were so angry about. Whatever it is, it's eating you at your insides. And I'm still waiting on an explanation aboutâ€" Eret lowers his voice just to be cautious â€" "Your decision to fling yourself at me like that."

Hiccup puffs out his chest in protest. "I'm not one hundred percent falling in love with your tone, \_Eret son of Eret\_."

Eret guffaws which only causes more indignation to surface from Hiccup's defensive temper.

"I'm serious! You have no business striking that that kind of tone with your Chief, as if he's one of your conquests orâ€|wanton strumpets."

Eret rolls his eyes and stuffs his knuckles in his mouth to stifle his laughter.

"Anyhow, I digress. I'll explain, I promise," Hiccup pledges. He idly twirls his index finger around the rim of his mug. "I've had a long day and I'd rather just worry about it later. I haven't gotten a lot of sleep lately."

Well, that much is glaringly apparent, but Eret politely turns a blind eye to that observation.

"I'm going to hold you to that," Eret warns.

"Yes \_sir\_," Hiccup jeers sarcastically.

"Get up, I'll walk you home. And don't trip over yourself like last time. There's no need to embarrass yourself."

Hiccup parts his mouth in protest but Eret shushes him before he gets the chance to speak. He hauls Hiccup's arm around his shoulder and they make their way towards Hiccup's home.

\* \* \*

><p>Eret expects Valka's presence when they enter Hiccup's residence.<p>

"My mom is meeting with the other women. Someone in the group is expecting a child soon," Hiccup explains, kicking off his boots. Hiccup's jaw clenches at the term 'child.' "In case you were wondering where she was."

"Something wrong?" Eret asks, stepping into Hiccup's den to find Toothles snoozing by the fireplace. He looks so peaceful when he sleeps and maybe a little endearing, too, but Eret won't verbalize that.

"What?"

"You tensed up when you said 'child.'"

"Oh."

Hiccup exhales deafeningly as he unclasps his armor and peels off his leather coating. The room is murky and dark save for a few candles in Hiccup's bedroom. Valka must have lit them before she left for the night. It was sweet of her to consider her son at all times, not just when he was present. Part of Eret is nipped with a twinge of displeasure directed towards Hiccup. He was lucky to have her as a mother and Hiccup's animosity didn't seem reasonable.

"It's weird to watch everyone grow up around you and see them begin families of their own. And I—" Hiccup pauses his ministrations and chews anxiously on his tongue—" I don't know I guess it's a reminder of what I have ahead of me."

"You're scared of your future," Eret states.

"Well, yeah," Hiccup says. "Aren't you?"

"You're expected to start your own family," Eret drawls, piecing together the enigma that was Hiccup's chaotic turmoil.

Hiccup ducks his head.

"Yeah," he whispers.

"I'm sorry," Eret splutters, "I shouldn't have asked. I didn't mean to—" "

"No," Hiccup reassures. "No, it's alright. You really are perceptive! Where would I be without your impeccable talents?"

"Dead, most likely."

Hiccup's affectionate laughter radiates Eret's senses. Eret feels a hollow, nervous flutter in his belly and it isn't at all unwelcome.

"Hiccup," He announces.

"Yeah?"

Hiccup now stands in the room, barefoot, in his green tunic and pants. Eret doesn't often see him in this state of undress and for some reason it's more vulnerable than in he were naked And Eret had seen Hiccup naked, at least in his dreams, which he wouldn't be opposed to revisiting.

"You alright over there, pal?" Hiccup jokes.

Eret doesn't respond. Alternatively, he strides forward, grazes the bottom of Hiccup's chin with his palm, and aligns their lips so they fit together perfectly, like missing pieces to a puzzle. Both men didn't drink much earlier, not as much as they often do, but Eret can still taste the delectable silky tang from the mead on Hiccup's tongue. The intoxication from the flavor dizzies his vision and dries his throat. He wants so much of this young man, it's surreal.

Eret's heartbeats palpitate when the smaller manâ€”before tensing from surpriseâ€”hastily grab at his biceps. They both seize their intimate exchange to look into one another's eyes for permission to carry on.

"I, um," Hiccup stammers, a series of explanations unleashing from his gaping mouthâ€”" I know this is kind of unexpected and, in recent discovery, also not unexpected."

Hiccup's tightens his grip on Eret's biceps, as if squeezing him will keep him closer; to ensure that neither will run away from what they're craving so badly.

"I mean, when you put it into perspective, it'sâ€”hrmmff."

Hiccup's sentence halts when Eret swallows his sounds with his own hungry and desperate mouth. Hiccup doesn't leave room for protest. There's an ambitious struggle over who domineers the kiss; a fraught and prying skirmish of tongues rutting against one another and teeth clashing vehemently.

Ultimately, Eret's experienced mouth wins. He sucks lightly at Hiccup's tongueâ€”this rewards him with a delightful whimper. If he doesn't stop now, there's a chance they'll go farther and he wants that, more than anything, but he's not ready. Not yet.

Eret swears he hears a whine of protest when he pulls away from Hiccup's warmth. Hiccup clears his throat.

"Eret, Iâ€”"

"Don't worry about it."

"I'm not entirely sure what this is."

"It's alright," Eret whispers. "Neither do I."

"I like, though," Hiccup affirms. His endearing grin lights a fluttering tenderness in Eret's chest.

Eret inhales quickly, preparing the right words to attribute to the unease and spontaneity of their affair.

\_Thank you, Hiccup. You've shown me so much. You've given me a new home. You've given me new friends. You've changed me and without you I wouldn't be the man I am today.\_

There's an anxious knot stretched in the back of his throat that impedes his ability to speak. Internally, he curses himself for not gathering the courage to be forthright. It may take time, he thinks, to disseminate the nature and purpose of their bond. For now, he can wait.

"Goodnight, Hiccup."

Vague traces of disappointment cloud Hiccup's temperament but his satisfaction returns when Eret places a chaste kiss to the scar on Hiccup's chin.

Eret sees his way out, or begins to, when Hiccup replies, "Goodnight

to you, too," and he yields his pace.

"I'll see you around, I guess. I mean, obviously, it's hard not to bump into each other. Small town, right? Regardless  
Iâ€œ"

"\_Hiccup\_."

"Right. Sorry."

Hiccup grins sheepishly and waves his hand. Eret passes Toothless, still curled up by the fireplace, unaltered by Eret's departure.

Eret closes the door quietly as he exits.

\* \* \*

><p>Hi. Thank you all so much for your reviews and your feedback. I really appreciate it so much! It means a lot to me and it encourages me to continue writing. You're all lovely and beautiful, every single one of you.<p>

Ty not to get to impatient with me, these two will get cozier with one another. There will be smut, maybe in the next chapter. I thought about writing it in this chapter but I thought it was too soon for them to fool around. Idk.

Originally, I wanted this to be a two-parter. Hahha nope not anymore. At the very least, maybe 3 or 4 chapters. Not sure. Anyhow, stay tuned! If I'm slow to update, it's because of shool because sadly, I take summer classes and finals are approaching soon. Ugh.

On a somewhat related note, I may or may not be drawing some fanart inspired by my fic. Hon hon hon.

### 3. Chapter 3

"You ready?"

Hiccup slides his helmet over his face, gives his dragon's saddle a brief tug, and hoists himself over. Toothless's claws dig ragged streaks into the dirt and he fidgets, anxiously. The boy and his dragon must have spent some time apart because Toothless is packed with fervor, shuffling his wings impatiently.

"Not yet," Eret suggests, "I have an idea to make this race worthwhile. Let's place a bet."

"You have a lot of confidence for a beginner!"

"I'm serious."

Hiccup hooks his prosthetic leg into place and readies himself on the saddle.

"Why would you want to set yourself up for failure?"

Eret crosses his arms, grateful that he and his Rumblehorn are well

acquainted enough that they can scowl in unison. "You really don't think I can beat you?"

"Not a chance."

Eret grins and shifts his weight on Skullcrusher's wriggling bulk. He waits patiently for Hiccup to unfold Toothless's makeshift tail fin. Toothless trots in place, giddily and Hiccup chuckles, placing a firm hand on his neck, motioning for him to yield his eagerness.

"I think you underestimate me."

"Change my mind, then," Hiccup counters. The helmet cloaks most of Hiccup's charming countenance but Eret distinguishes a devious sparkle in the dragon rider's eyes. Was Eret being imaginative, or was there also a trace of coquettishness in his pitch?

"See that peak over there?"

Eret thrusts his finger into the direction of a towering summit in the distance. Surrounding the mountain are columns of desolate islands and if anything, they provide a safe range for landing.

"Whoever reaches that peak first wins," Eret announces.

"Alright, sounds good to me. If I win, you have to do all of my chores for a week."

"You useless bloke. What, are you ten years old?"

"It's my end of the bargain! Take it or leave it."

"Fine."

He seizes his Rumblehorn's formidable antlers, and adds, "If I win, I get the next two evenings off. I hate it when you assign me evening shifts."

And then, without warning, Toothless lunges forward, hurdling off the cliff to soar into a thick seam of mist.

"Hey!" Eret hollers after him, taking off into the sky, "A countdown would have sufficed!"

Sudden momentum sends him reeling backwards and Eret almost forgets how to steer properly due to the violent rush of adrenaline coursing through his veins, impairing his judgment and dizzying his senses.

There's no apology from Hiccup, who is aiming to distance himself miles away from Skullcrusher and his new companion. Hiccup's exhilarative whoop rings in Eret's ears and he fixates on the Night Fury, accelerating with ease.

Radiant, powerful black wings rip through the fog and Skullcrusher must double his efforts in order to meet his opponent's speed. "Come on, boy," Eret encourages the elegant beast. Skullcrusher steadies his pace and they glide smoothly, furthering their descent into the hazed and cool morning sky.

Black, silken hair whips against his cheeks, lashing him in the eyes and sticking to the corners of his mouth. No wonder Hiccup wears a helmet; the winds are harsh and unforgiving up here. Regardless of Berk's drab autumn chill, the navy blue ocean beneath them pushes and pulls, gently, and Eret has no qualms detaching himself from the rest of the world, for a brief span of time, to observe the icy body of water ripple and heave from the exertion of its natural rhythm.

If this distraction earns him the loss of this race and he's stuck picking up Hiccup's messes for a week, then so be it. Scenic treasury besieges the rider and his dragon; any angle he turns will lead him to an untouched, lush fragment of wilderness.

Skullcrusher screeches merrily, his song sending vibrations alongside Eret's hunched frame. They twirl through a soft sheet of clouds and soon, they're at least a foot from Hiccup and Toothless.

Hiccup spots his challenger and he bids Eret a pompous wave (he's probably grinning from beneath his mask, the smug prat) and he quickens his pace until there's no possibility of reaching that wild momentum. Eret is much too impressed by Hiccup's natural talent to work alongside his dragon—"as if they both shared the same mind and soul"—to bear any disgruntlement. Hiccup and Toothless successfully weave their way around the summit (they do this twice, to boast), circling the mountaintop before landing on a nearby isle.

Eret reconvenes, carefully preparing to dismount. From above, he witnesses Hiccup, shouting and hopping up in down, performing what he thinks is supposed to be a victory dance, encouraging Toothless to join him. The Night fury elects to swat him playfully with his paw.

Dust and withered autumn leaves kick up from the surface as Skullcrusher plants on a patch of dirt.

"I hope you enjoy being my servant for the next week," Hiccup jeers. Eret hops off his Rumblehorn and pats him on the snout. Skullcrusher grumbles happily and nestles his head in Eret's shoulders.

"Don't listen to them, boy," Eret coos. "You did good. They're just a pair of show offs."

"Aww," Hiccup taunts, removing his helmet. It tumbles and rolls away, leaving Hiccup with a disheveled mop of hair sticking out from all ends.

"Is someone a sore loser? Are you a bigger baby than him?"

Hiccup trudges his shoulder into Toothless. Toothless does not appreciate the comparison. He snarls and whacks Hiccup on the head with an expanded wing.

"You still seem pretty riled up," Eret snorts. "How about we solve this dispute for good? Man to man. No creatures."

Eret pivots, bends his knees, and thrusts his fists into the air, grinning idiotically, more so than he intended.

"I'm a pacifist, in case you haven't noticed," Hiccup chides. He runs

a hand through his mousy tresses, attempting to smoothen the untidiness he created.

"You're declining because you know I have the upper hand."

"I'll have you know," Hiccup explains, hands resting on his hips, "that my smaller physique makes for unsullied agility."

Eret's posture deflates as he cackles in disbelief. His hands drop to his sides and he shakes his head.

"You know what?" Hiccup huffs. "You're right, let's do this. I'll give you a fine example of my dexterity that you so clearly lack."

Eret braces himself for an impact when Hiccup rushes towards him with speed that he admits he didn't quite expect. Hiccup aims to swipe Eret in the gut but Eret catches his wrists in mid approach. With no difficulty, Eet heaves his body forward. Hiccup loses his balance and lands flat on his back, Eret's strapping body collapsing atop his. Eret smiles, triumphantly, straddles Hiccup's thighs, and constricts his clutch on the Viking's wrists.

"Okay, so," Hiccup wheezes, the wind clearly knocked out of his lungs, "what really counts is my courage and wit to initiate this fight."

"You are as quick as you say you are," Eret encourages. "Just not quick enough."

"Ow, this is worse than getting tackled by Toothless. You can get off me now, you careless brute."

Eret chortles and rolls off the youth, shuffling on the ground until he collides with the shape of Skullcrusher's coiled mass. The two Viking use their dragons sprawled bodies for back support and ample cushioning.

"I consider it progress."

"How do you mean?" Eret asks. He stretches his legs languidly, resting his hands behind his head.

"Five years ago I couldn't even pick up an axe."

"Yes, I've been told you used to be the runt of the litter."

"Glad to know that Berk speaks of me so favorably."

Eret smirks, roguishly, and rejoins, "Rumor also has it that puberty did right by you."

"What?"

"You grew up to be a handsome lad."

"Oh," Hiccup pipes. "People think I'm handsome? You think I'm handsome?"

"Yes, Hiccup."

Hiccup's cheeks are dotted with coy hues of pink. He scratches the back of his head—a habit that's often characterized by Hiccup's modesty or shyness—and extends a lopsided grin.

"Thank you," Hiccup says. "Wait, no, never mind. I'm still mad at you for crushing my lungs. I'm withholding my full appreciation."

Eret's eyes roll, reaching above, into the high heavens. Hiccup stands up, straightens his stance, and secures loose straps on his thigh that must've come undone during their wrestle. Eret continues to recline lazily, a free hand stroking the abrasive scales nestled below the Rumblehorn's belly. Skullcrusher purrs joyfully.

Eret's eyes roam shamelessly over the arc of Hiccup's bent form; truly, a lovely display.

He studies the young man's soft, ruffled hair, his round button nose, and the chiseled, angular cut of his jaw. The prying stare travels, focusing on Hiccup's slender profile, his thin waist, narrow hips, long, lean legs.

He licks his lips, ogling the curve of Hiccup's bottom and then his front, the tight, leather-clad prominence between his legs.

"Hey!" Hiccup scolds, completing his task. He catches Eret in the midst of his indulgence.

"What?" Eret inquires, feigning innocence.

"I see you eyeing me," Hiccup accuses, slumping against Toothless.

"I'm sorry."

"No you're not."

"You're right," Eret laughs. "I'm not."

Hiccup blushes but the glow permeating his face indicates that he's flattered. The lankier Viking rubs a tender spot behind Toothless's ears. Toothless's eyelids flutter and a wet tongue flops from the side of his mouth. It looks comical, if not endearing. Eret would've never envisioned seeing this domestic side of a dragon.

\* \* \*

><p>"The first time I taught my dad how to properly fly a dragon, it was with Toothless."<p>

"You never told me that," Eret muses. "What was it like?"

Hiccup's laughter colors the hazed, gray ambiance. They've been traipsing the barren landscape, simply enjoying one another's company, reminiscing and recalling the earlier years: times that didn't involve the same prospects that they face in the present.

"It was a nightmare."

Eret shoots Hiccup a knowing, disparaging and almost parental frown.



Hiccup slouches and sighs, "I guess I owe you that explanation, huh?"

"That you do."

"Wow, how do I even begin to describe the mess that I've created for myself?"

Hiccup ducks his head, hoping to avert eye contact. Eret contests him by refusing to alter his gaze.

"Well, let's go way back, then, shall we? My girlfriend of five years stayed by my side after my dad's funeral, after Drago attacked Berk, after everything, and how do I repay her? By freaking out when she brings up our future together."

"Hiccup," Eret consoles, "You're not wrong for feeling scared and it's alright if you're unsure what it is that you want."

"No, you don't understand—I did want it. To have a family of my own, I mean."

Eret tilts his in confusion. "I'm not quite so sure I follow. You've changed your mind?"

Hiccup idly strokes a patch of his Night Fury's scales. Toothless senses discomfort in his owner's demeanor. He nudges his snout into Hiccup's knee and peers up at him, with a reassuring glint.

"I was scared of becoming chief but also, deep down, I was honored. I had this perfect idea in my mind of what my life was going to be like from here on out. I was going to get married to Astrid and we'd provide an heir."

"And—?"

"And in my idealized world of what was supposed to happen, I'd have a son or daughter and they'd grow up with a grandfather."

"Stoick was always supposed to be part of your future," Eret repeats.

"It's a lame excuse, I know, but it's the best reason I can find for escaping the pressures of adulthood. It definitely isn't a good enough excuse to push Astrid away. So all of this coupled with the occasional existential dread, as you could imagine, makes for sleepless nights."

Eret inches nearer until he uses Toothless's belly as a cushion. He stretches his arm behind Hiccup's neck, carefully, and places his arm around the armored shoulder. Eret suspects a shed of hesitation because to be honest, although they have kissed, this gesture is one shared simultaneously by close friends as well as lovers. He's not sure how Hiccup will interpret it.

Hiccup practically hurls himself into the embrace. Thin arms envelop Eret's upper body and Hiccup buries his face into the soft furs of his shawl. The arm draping over Hiccup's shoulder constricts and pulls him closer.

"Sorry," Hiccup mumbles, into the downy pelt. "I justâ€¦I could use this right now."

Toothless curls his body around the two men, protectively, as if he's initiating his version of a hug.

"I'm sorry," Hiccup repeats with an audible waver in his voice.

"Hiccup, it's alright."

"It's not alright. My mom noticed that Astrid and I were drifting apart. She tried to talk to me about it."

"I'm sure that didn't bode well, considering what a stubborn git you are."

"\_Thanks\_."

Eret gives Hiccup's shoulder a reassuring squeeze to let him know his words are all in jest.

"My mom told me that I shouldn't run away from my fears and she's right. I guess that's why I was so angry: because she was reminding me of how stupid I'm acting."

"You're not stupid."

"Aren't I? Astrid and I have been through so much and I threw it all away. I never wanted to hurt her. I don't want to hurt Astrid, my mother, or anyone I care about."

"Hiccup," Eret soothes, "I don't doubt that but you can't please everyone."

"I can try, right?"

"You can start apologizing to your mother and speaking with Astrid."

Hiccup raises his head and says, "I know I should, but I can't tell Astrid I've been romanticizing my best friend."

Heaviness lowers in Eret's chest, coiling and seizing his lungs an heart, but he knows better. He'll have to ignore it for now. Above all else, Hiccup's happiness is what matters.

"If you want to mend what you and Astrid had, then that's your choice."

"I don't know what I want but I can't give up whatever \_this\_ is."

"You can't have both, I'm afraid."

Eret sighs and peers into the sullen green eyes that search his, hopeful for answers. He tucks a lock of Hiccup's hair behind the soft shell of his ear. Affectionately, he begins to run his fingers through the pliable curls.

"You couldn't pay all the riches in the world to be twenty again," Eret declares.

\* \* \*

><p>Neither had been keeping track of time but it must have been hours since their departure from Berk. Sunlight peaks through dreary clouds and a layer of mist breaks apart, gradually, leaving room for rays of heat to bask the formerly nipped atmosphere.<p>

A twinge of disappointment resonates within not only Eret, but the remainder of the party, as well. They fly away from their desolate cliff to return to their burden of responsibility in Berk. Eret doesn't remember the last time Hiccup had that amount of leisurely bliss to himself.

"I guess I should get back to the town," Hiccup says in a hollow voice. He leaps off Toothless and lands on the balls of his feet, unfastening his constricting armor. Eret follows his lead and slides off his Rumblehorn, staring blankly into the thick forests that guided their way towards the center of Berk.

"Hiccup," Eret hums.

"Yeah?"

Slowly, eyes remaining open, lest he overlook any alterations in Hiccup's gaze, he lifts his face to the lad's. Their lips meet with a reserved hesitation that ebbs away, little by little, as Hiccup's curious mouth explored his, rapt with enthrallment. Hiccup wraps his arm around Eret's neck. Eret can feel the wonderment through Hiccup's embrace and the soft strokes of his tongue.

Eret tears away, lightheaded and disillusioned by the fact that the slim body against his is retracting its warmth. Hiccup bites his lip and then parts his mouth but Eret steals his chance to disrupt the silence.

"That was fun."

"Yeah it was."

"So, umâ€œ" Eret starts.

"Yeah?"

"I-Iâ€œ"should I go?"

"Not unless you want to stick around and watch me adhere to my chiefly duties."

"That sounds fascinating, but I think I'll pass."

When Hiccup and Toothless make their way along the path home, Hiccup turns his head one last time to catch a glimpse of Eret, as if he feels guilty that their tryst has come to an end. That acknowledgement produces a recognizable flutter in Eret's stomach.

\* \* \*

><p>"Valka!" Eret greets when he sees the tall woman emerge into his line of vision. It's more an alarmed yelp than it is a greeting because Eret is tremendously unprepared for her visit.<p>

His palms secrete a lukewarm sweat and his heart rate rapidly increases, as though he's hiding a secret from her. Frankly, he might as well be. He's pining for her son and, Odin have mercy, having erotic \_dreams\_ about him.

Eret's first instinct is to infer that Valka has arrived to tell him she knows all about their private endeavors but Eret upholds his composure, suppressing paranoid delusions.

Eret is dwelling in the stables, tending to his dragon. He was brushing dead scales off his Rumblehorn's back before Valka entered and diverted his attention.

Valka is brimming with merriment and she enters, her Stormcutter in tow.

"What I wouldn't give to watch Stoick bond with this one," Valka comments, gaping at the armored reptile. A smile etches across her narrow, bright face and it's mixed with nostalgia, sorrow, but also fond remembrance.

"I imagine it was an unusual courtship, initially."

"Yes, he had his soft spots. Unfortunately, that side of him often lacked a finesse," Valka laughs softly. She extends her hand and Skullcrusher welcomes her greeting, nuzzling his trunk into her open palm.

"The first time I met your husband he shoved me in the face."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Oh, I deserved it."

Valka giggles, gracing Eret with an knowing yet unreadable expression. Cloudjumper imitates his owner, titling his head. The resemblance is uncanny between the woman and her Stormcutter, they bore into him with widened, studious eyes.

"Lucky my boy straightened you out."

"Lucky I listened to him."

"Now if only he would listen to others," she jeers, light heartedly. "I'm glad I found you, Eret. I'm here to thank you for what you've done for Hiccup."

"You're welcome," Eret says, though it comes out sounding more like a question than a formal response.

"I know you two have been spending time together. Whatever it is that you've been telling him, he's been taking it to heart."

Eret swallows hard.

"Does he seem different? Because of me?"

"Remarkably. His face lights up whenever you're mentioned. He says he's going to teach you how to fly like him; like his dragons."

"That's the plan. It's terrifying, to be honest. I don't know how he does it, or how you perform the stunts you've shared with us riders so far."

"It's all about trust," Valka explains. She has the same lovely eyes as her son and when they crease and twinkle from her honest smile, Eret's apprehension dwindles. He carefully soaks her words, immerses himself in her guidance. "You'll see."

\* \* \*

><p>Ships polish the shores of Berk on the final week of autumn. Hiccup is gone for the afternoon but a few of his friends hurriedly make a beeline for the vessel when they see its sails surfacing from the horizon. Trader Johann spots Eret and coaxes him into the segment of his traded goods; the ones that contain new weaponry.<p>

"I have more than enough axes and knives," Eret protests, bidding the merchant a sheepish grin. Instead, he flips through a collection of parchments, scrutinizing their contents.

"Ooh," Ruffnut says, hopping on deck, "Good. More sharp and pointy things for me, then."

"He used to be so cool," Her brother mutters into her ear, "Now he's looking through books. And he's reading them."

"Knowledge is such a useless tool, isn't it?" Eret calls to them, rolling his eyes. "It's only the very tool that domesticated an entire species of dragons into your homeland."

"Don't you hate it when he words stuff like that?" Snotlout argues, "It's so confusing, it's like you can't tell whether he's being serious or not."

Eret ignores them and begins searching through various crafts and pens that are available for exchange.

"I'd never confuse you like that. I'm a straightforward guy, just what you need."

"Ech," Ruffnut gags.

A small bottle of ink finally piques his interests and picks it up and examines it for details. "What's this?" Eret asks the merchant.

"Fine ink from Rome."

"Really? Rome?"

"Aye, the finest I've collected."

"Good for writing and artistry?"

"No complaints so far. Is this for you or is it a gift? For a special someone?"

"It's for a friend," Eret lies.

He exchanges the bottle of ink for a sack of apples. Sacrifices must be made, but this one is particularly painful because seldom does he have the chance to enjoy fruit. Living on a ship for months denied him scores of savory treats. After much consideration, Eret opts to hand it to Hiccup in person, when he returns.

\* \* \*

><p>This was supposed to be a one shot smut fic but then it just kind of accidentally turned into a multi-chapter fic that goes into detail about their big nerdy crushes on each other? Oop. I'm going to feel kind of weird when more HTTYD content comes out and Eret gets a ton of backstory (hopefully) and my depiction of him could be totally off? Oh well. Whatever. No worries, I'm not going to complain about more HTTYD content.<p>

I also feel a teensy bit odd writing this because I'm a huge Hiccup shipper but sometimes I get an idea and it just consumed my soul and ruins my life. Again, sorry for slow updates. I literally just finished summer semester this week.

#### 4. Chapter 4

"Hiccup, wake up."

Eret had burst into the Haddock's residence, stomped upstairs, entered Hiccup's bedroom, and is currently demanding the chief's presence. A few clothes lay strewn across Hiccup's floor. Sketches, notes, and parchment paper overlap one another in a cluttered mess. Like hell he was going to do Hiccup's chores for a week.

"Mmph," Hiccup replies from under a layer of thick pelts. He ignores Eret's voice, shuffles, and submerges his body further into the cocoon of blankets.

"Hiccup," Eret hisses, urgently, stepping to the edge of his bed, giving his back a firm nudge. "Get up."

Pushes and shoves are administered to Hiccup's immovable form in order to rouse him, but they prove to be unsuccessful. Grouchy mumbles are distinguished from below Hiccup's protective layer of wooly covers.

Eret rotates, focusing on the slab of cool stone that serves as a resting spot for Toothless, from across the room.

"Toothless," Eret whispers, with a sly grin. "\_Up\_."

He points to Toothless, then to Hiccup's bed, signaling the Night Fury to pounce. Toothless reacts accordingly, hurdling into Hiccup's lap. The impulsive and unexpected crushing weight of a dragon startles Hiccup awake and he's huffs a few grumbling protests.

"Hey, bud," he mutters, eyes still not fully opened.

Eret observes gleefully as the Night Fury shifts, flattens his back, and plunges his snout dangerously close to Hiccup's face. Unhinging his scaly maw, Toothless then screeches, enthusiastically, unleashing a steady torrent of dragon breath into his friend's unwilling nostrils.

Hiccup shrieks, lurching to his side, fighting to shield himself from the putrid stench. Rolling over doesn't provide any relief; Hiccup tosses and turns, unable to break free from the twisted layer of blankets.

"Good morning," Eret greets, cheerfully. He laughs when Hiccup loses his balance, topples off his bed and lands on the floor with a thud.

"Son of a goat," Hiccup snarls. Berk's fearless chief groans and releases himself from the trapping furs and wools. When his eyes regain the ability to see clearly, Hiccup detects Eret in his doorway. He is less than pleased.

"Did you sleep well?" Eret asks, chummily.

"Yes, I was having a wonderful dream. Thank you for interrupting it."

"Ooh, what sort of dream? Was it one of the \_adult\_ nature?" Eret teases.

He doubles over laughing, clutching his sides when Hiccup glares knives and daggers at him.

"I was just joking! You were having a naughty dream, weren't you?"

"What did you wake me up for?" Hiccup asks, crawling on all fours, searching aimlessly for his boots. His hair attains an even messier, scruffier appearance.

"The twins have been yak tipping again. I was riding with Skullcrusher, watching the sunrise, and I caught them red handed."

"You've got to be kidding me," Hiccup gripes, stretching his legs, shoving a foot into his boot. Hiccup's sleeping attire consists of another tunic—"this one is grey"—and a spare pair of trousers that are very loose and ill fitting. Eret wonders whom its been handed down from.

"Why were Ruffnut and Tuffnut out, in the crack of dawn, tipping over yaks?" Hiccup drones. "You know what? Spare me the details."

"Will do," Eret chuckles.

"Thanks for letting me know. I'll take care of it. Also, thank you for instructing my dragon to breath his rancid, morning breath into my face."

Hiccup pouts, and jerks his head to Toothless, who is settled comfortably on Hiccup's warm bedspread. Toothless sniffs

aloofly.

"Not a morning person, eh, mate?"

Hiccup mutters something under his breathe, hoists himself off the floor, and begins pacing his room for a downy coat that will keep him warm during this hour.

"Glad you didn't land on it," Eret jeers.

"What?" Hiccup queries, tugging a furry pelt around his shoulders.

"Your early morning surprise. Not too long ago, a crewmate of mine had the same problem; only he fell off his bed and landed flat on his stomach. His jollies didn't work right for months."

"Thankfully, Toothless's morning breath solved that dilemma."

"Ha, so you admit it. You were having naughty dreams."

"Youâ€" " Hiccup scolds. He charges towards Eret and raises a reproachful index finger. "If I weren't so tired, I'd give you a piece of my mind."

Before Toothless and Hiccup prepare to take off, from outside the open window, Eret kisses Hiccup on the cheek and says, "Good morning."

Hiccup blushes and forgets why he was angry.

\* \* \*

><p>Today, Eret and Astrid are instructing a class of young boys and girls: most are fourteen or fifteen. Astrid is the more adept rider (fair enough, she's been at it for five years) so she assumes head mentorship while Eret works in conjunction with her. Snotlout, the twins, and Fishlegs are present as well, though Hiccup explained to Eret some time ago that they aren't exactly terrific candidates when it comes to scholarly pursuits.<p>

"I think Hiccup has a new lady friend," Tuffnut singsongs, sharpening an axe, while the others demonstrate how to properly dismantle dragon traps. "He's been all smiley and he has that dumb look on his face."

"That's great news, Tuffnut," Astrid sighs, wearily. She does seem to be in good spirits, despite her recent breakup, though anyone could deduce that the pain lingers. Insides churning, Eret reflects and understands what Hiccup meant when he declared that he never wished to hurt anyone.

Ruffnut smacks her brother alongside his head. Tuffnut's helmet rattles from the force of her blow. "You're not supposed to tell her that, idiot."

"Guys," Astrid explains, "We're adults. Hiccup is allowed to see whomever he wants."

Snotlout promenades up to Astrid, haughtily. Astrid's limbs tense,



noticeably, as she awaits his inevitable proposition Eret could advise Snotlout against taking one step further or uttering anything that he'll regret, but he doesn't. Entertainment is sparse during these long working hours and the Jorgenson boy needs a good, swift reality check.

"You know," Snotlout informs, cracking his knuckles. "With Hiccup finally out of the picture, it could be just me and you."

"Right, instead the other handsome suitors out there, I should settle for you," Astrid scoffs. The twins hoot from the sidelines and this evokes an excited and amused clatter among the younger students. The crowds of apprentices giggle as they survey the wreck about to unfold.

"Come on, it'd be a great way to get back at him. Hiccup probably sneaks off in the middle of the night to go spend time with Heather. You remember her, right? What better way than to get revenge than to hook up with me"

Astrid expression remains flat as she takes the wooden end of her axe and jams it into Snotlout's stomach. Howling in pain, Snotlout tips over and clasps his vulnerable sore spot.

"Well done," Eret congratulates.

"Thanks," Astrid says, brushing her bangs to the side.

She instructs the students to take an hour long break, help themselves to some lunch, then return for Eret's lecture; he's been given the task of explaining proper saddle care. The riders disperse but Astrid doesn't budge. Snotlout, Ruffnut, Tuffnut, and Fishlegs usher the teenagers out the arena while Astrid huddles closer to her Deadly Nadder. Lovingly, she pats Stormfly's beige underbelly.

"Has he always been that unbearable?" Eret asks, approaching the lively beast. Stormfly chirps happily, flailing her multicolored wings.

"Since we were kids," Astrid alleges. "You get used to it. A swift kick or shove tends to set him straight, I've learned."

"Why put up with him at all?"

"Oh, he has his moments," Astrid titters. Stormfly purrs contently, baring her throat. "Few and far in between, but he has them."

The tight bonds in Eret's chest twist coil, enveloping his lungs, impounding the ability to inhale evenly. Drawing in a shaky breath, Eret places a consoling hand on the woman's shoulder.

"Astrid, I'm sorry about Hiccup."

"Don't be," Astrid replies, casually, hands now resting on her hips. "I know you're seeing him."

Eret's hand wrenches from its hold.

"Wha-"

"First of all, I'm not stupid. I've seen the way you look at him."

"Astridâ€"

"And Hiccup told me last night."

"Oh."

"But I knew long before he said anything."

"How do you feel about it...?"

Astrid bids him a tight-lipped grin. She looks elsewhere, off into the distance, studying the clouds and their alterations. She aimlessly paces her Deadly Nadder before sitting on an overturned bucket close by. Eret accompanies her, sitting cross-legged, on the ground.

Slumping in her seat while inattentively toying with the locks of hair that have come undone from her braid, Astrid says, "It still hurts, I won't lie. We were together for five years and it's been weeksâ€"maybe a monthâ€"since we split up."

Eret looks to her and then follows her fixation on the grey clouds. They've been transforming from docile, fluffy pillows into an ominous overcast. The first snowfall must be arriving any day now. Silence pervades the empty dome as Eret waits patiently for Astrid to continue. It'd be terribly rude to interject apologize, especially after witnessing what Astrid was capable ofâ€"poor Snotlout (not really, though.)

"I guess I'd rather it be you than anyone else. I know that he can trust you."

"Your blessing means a lot to meâ€"ow."

Astrid scuffles, faces Eret, and kicks him in the side. It's not a painful kick, not as excruciating as anything Snotlout must've endured over the years, but it leaves an impressionable sting.

"That's for wooing him away."

"Astridâ€"

"Shut up, I'm joking. Sort of."

"What do you mean?"

The rigid aura that's been crushing the young Viking woman lifts, suddenly, to reveal a genuine, yet longing grin. Exhaling calmly, Astrid clarifies, "Hiccup has been mesmerized by you since the day you two met, or so it seems."

Eret levels his posture, straightening his back, pitching his full consideration. Astrid tucks a strand of hair behind her ear.

"I doubt he ever told you this but after we defeated Drago and his alpha, he wouldn't stop talking about you. He'd tell me he was so

excited to have someone new to mentor; someone with great potential."

"And I take it that's why he gave me his father's dragon."

"Yup. He thought you were worthy. He said he was elated when he saw you had changed your mind about dragons. During the battle of the Bewilderbeasts? Seeing you ride with Stormfly instilled a lot of hope within him. And then you were there, too, at Stoick's funeral."

Eret nods solemnly.

"When he and I boarded your ship, Hiccup was about to demonstrate his bond with Toothless to and your men but then our friends hijacked the plan and carried him away. Before that, though, he told me you stood there, quietly, and you looked like you were about to consider his offer."

"I would have if you all hadn't dropped a massive Gronkle on my back"

Astrid snickers.

"Get up," she demands, bluntly. She bolts out of her seat and shoves Eret with her foot. "I'm starving and you should eat, too."

Eret winces, rises slowly to escort Astrid to the Great Hall. As the two exit the stadium with their dragons in trailing behind them, Eret comments, "I figured you'd be more upset."

"Eret," Astrid sighs, "I have to respect that this is what Hiccup wants. I want him to be happy and yes, I'm upset because he couldn't find that with me. Letting him go isn't an easy decision, but it's the right one."

"I'll do right by him, Astrid. You have my word."

"I know," Astrid says, beaming, eyes bright with sincerity.

"Come on," Astrid had urged him later that day, after his lecture. "You have to come to dinner with us. Valka is baking crab cakes."

\* \* \*

><p>The great hall is littered with Viking men and women, as per usual, this time with an unlikely addition. Hiccup is seated with his friends and it's a comfort he's been denied since chiefdom; his duties require long, sleepless nights and time away from the hearth of his community.<p>

Eret is glad to see Hiccup surrounded by his friends. They aren't a bad bunch and Eret enjoys their company but he has to wonder sometimes, how and why he tolerates them. When Fishlegs cracks a joke, Hiccup smiles, laughs, and Eret is engrossed in his affectionate, lopsided grin, particularly the two large front teeth that poke out in the most unique fashion. He's worried at first, for unwinding in front of these new allies, and granting himself the prospect to marvel at this young man that's changed him immeasurably.

Fear and indecision recedes when Astrid catches him in the middle of his awestruck gaze and she raises her eyebrows at him, giving him her sanction to purse her former flame—a gesture then supplemented by a reprimanding scowl that reads, 'do \_not\_ screw this up.'

"So, um, Hiccup," Eret remarks, unfamiliar with the etiquette that's been established among his comrades. "Why don't you tell us about your day?"

There's a threatening silence and Astrid closes her eyes, pinching the bridge of her nose. She tried, she really did, but she wasn't counting on Eret's lack finesse.

"Well," Hiccup says, dazed to find all eyes now on him. "Just chief stuff. Nothing special."

"Oh come on," Ruffnut bleats. "Your life can't be \_that\_ boring. I thought being chief was supposed to be exciting."

"Do you get to kill anyone?" Tuffnut asks, hunching over his plate. "You can throw people in prison now, right?"

"Guys," Astrid exclaims. "Knock it off. Seriously."

"No, it's fine," Hiccup, snorts. "Yes, I technically get to do all those things but I'd really rather avoid them if I can. But, um, there'll be a newborn arriving soon! I get to visit the family when the baby comes and I'm naming their firstborn. That's exciting, I think."

"Not really," Fishlegs interjects, meekly.

"Yeah," Snotlout says, wrinkling his nose. "Get back to us when you behead people."

"I think it's nice," Eret chimes in. A calloused hand fastens around Hiccup's bony shoulder.

"Thanks, Eret."

Hiccup turns to inspect the proximity of their bodies and it's clear that the boy is struggling to maintain a straight face. Eret can't deny that he loves the way Hiccup's body melts into his touch. When their eyes meet, it sends a current of electricity down his extremities that travel throughout his veins, laying rest somewhere between his heart and lungs. Hiccup smiles at him and Eret doesn't care that others might be watching their exchange.

Ever so subtly, Hiccup scoots a fraction closer to Eret until their thighs are touching. Eret's body freezes when he feels Hiccup's fingers wisp lightly along his aforementioned thigh, stopping when they reside on his knee. Eret wouldn't have thought Hiccup would be the first to make a move like this but he is not at all opposed.

"But, hey," Hiccup adds, nervously, "I don't know if I'll be any good at it. My name is Hiccup. What would I know?"

Eret's capacity to speak has failed him, and, oh for the love of

Thor, Hiccup was rubbing his knee with his palm. Gods have mercy on his weary soul; he just wasn't strong enough.

"Hey, Hiccup," Astrid cuts in, sparing him generously. "I don't think Eret has ever seen the portrait of you and Stoick hanging in the Great Hall. Why don't you show him?"

"Why would Eret want to see that dumb painting? It's not that impressive," Snotlout scoffs, shoving Valka's homemade crab cakes in his mouth.

"Shut up, Snotlout," Astrid snaps.

"That sounds wonderful," Eret agrees, a little too quickly. He'll have to repay Astrid for this tremendous favor for the rest of his life but that's the least of his worries. The two rise, simultaneously, and traipse to the back of the monumental foyer, where there are columns of pillars that separate them from fellow Berkians. Noises of chatter, clinking plates, and mugs die down as they distance themselves further, until Eret is presented with tablets illustrating the Haddock's legacy.

"There I am," He says, happily, pointing to the portrait of a teenaged Hiccup situated next to his towering, prevailing father.

"So that's what the Chief of Berk looked like as a wee lad? Oh, you were so precious," Eret teases. Hiccup had to have been fifteen or sixteen when this was painted. He looks short, slight, with a round, soft, boyish face and that same sweet, crooked smile.

"Any jokes you're going to make about my size are all things I've heard before. For the past twenty years."

Hiccup folds his arms across his chest as Eret inspects the representation of the two Haddock men. Eret pivots, invades most of Hiccup's personal space, and pins him against the supporting pillars.

"Um," Hiccup says, timidly, but relaxes when Eret cups Hiccup's chin between his fingers.

"What a pretty little thing you grew up to be."

Eret stares at the stubble forming along Hiccup's jaw.

"Excuse me, I'm not little. I am a manâ€"an adultâ€"and I would thank you to bear that in mind."

"Oh, my mistake," Eret mocks, playfully.

"Youâ€"oh, I , um, that's new," Hiccup gulps, as Eret slips a knee between his legs. "You should show some respect for your superior. For your ownâ€"ahâ€"sake. What?"

Eret chuckles and aligns their faces until their noses touch; not readying himself for a kiss just yet because he's not done toying with the lad.

"What you did back there. I didn't think you had it in you."

Some laughter dies down as a few families head out for the evening. Candles are blown out upon their departure, basking the two men in a dimly lit ambiance.

"I wanted to do it. Iâ€"I don't know, it's something I've been thinking about doing for a while."

"Is that right?"

Hiccup trembles as Eret traces Hiccup's jaw line and presses his knee further into the space of Hiccup's open legs, where he waits the delightful beginnings of arousal to appear (very soon, if he's lucky.)

"Y-yeah," Hiccup cracks through a dry mouth. "I like you a lot and it helps that you're really handsome. Geez, like, impossibly handsome."

"Hiccup, I hope I'm not being too forward," Eret says, calmly, not wanting to push him.

"Well, I'd say this is pretty dang forward, but I like it. It's fine. I was hoping this would happen. I'm thankful Snotlout and the twins aren't going to pick up on how obvious we were. Three out of, uh, five isn't so bad, hm?"

"Hiccup."

"Yes? Hi. H-hello."

Eret draws in a deep breathe before speaking, slowly, tantalizingly, making sure to let his breathe tickle the tip of Hiccup's nose, "I'd like to kiss you, Hiccup. I want to kiss you like we have been, only this time, I want to kiss more than just your lips."

Eret chest swells with wantonness when he hears Hiccup's breathe hitch. It's music to his ears.

"I want to kiss the corner of your mouth," Eret drawls. "Then, I want to kiss your chin, that \_lovely \_jaw of yours, your neck, your earsâ€"are you sensitive there?"

Eret outlines the curve of Hiccup's ear with his finger and this rewards him with a small squeak.

"Guess that answers my question. How about I nibble on your collarbones? Your stomach? I could grab those skinny hips of yours andâ€" "

Hiccup strangles out a tiny squeal when Eret punctuates his statement by grasping his thin waist. Their hips brush together, connecting perfectly.

"I think you get the gist of it."

Sure enough, a protruding hardness begins to build between the younger man's thighs. Eret rubs his knee against the erection, pleased when Hiccup arches into the touch.

"Wow, that's awfully descriptive," Hiccup chokes.

"Glad you think so."

"Do you think maybe we could do this somewhere else? I feel it's in poor taste to, er, kiss and whatnot in front of a painting of my dad and I."

"My place, then?"

\* \* \*

><p>Eret and Hiccup sprint out of the Great hall and it's not long before they giggle and stumble their way back to Eret's home. Skullcrusher has awoken upon his master's entrance and he nearly forgot about Toothless trotting beside Hiccup on their way here. Toothless sits on his kitchen floor, tilting his head, perched patiently albeit, confused.<p>

"Let him stay," Eret demands, in breathless anticipation. "He can watch for all I care. Bloody hell."

Soft lips attack his without hesitation and it's only been mere seconds since they've relocated. Eret chortles, plucking the smaller Viking from his body.

"Wait," Eret says. "I have a surprise for you."

"Yes," Hiccup inhales, reaching for the hem of Eet's pants. "And I'm dying to see it."

"No, not that, you bloke. Something else. It's in my room. Iâ€|bought it for you. Rather, I traded it."

"Really?"

Eret gently reaches for his hand, leads them upstairs, to his bedroom and without a word, hands him the bottle of ink from his nightstand. There's rustling from below, adjoined with irritable grunts. Eret can only suspect that Toothless is trying to garner Skullcrusher's attention, coaxing him to play, and not at all succeeding.

"Whatâ€|"

Hiccup squints his eyes, unable to analyze the small pint at first glance. "Oh," he whispers in realization, shaking the contents lightly. "Ink."

"Yes, from Rome."

"Eret, this isâ€|" Hiccup's voice trails off. He clenches the bottle of ink closely to his chest. His lifts his head and their gazes meet. Hiccup's eyes are large, raw, and profuse with wonderment. "This is amazing. What did you trade for this?"

"Apples. A parcel's worth. I figured you could use some ink. I know how much you like to draw in your spare time. "

Hiccup quietly places the gift back on the nightstand and murmurs,

"Thank you. Thank you so much. I didn't think I'd be able to refill my ink anytime soon, especially when the first snowfall hits."

"You're welc-ommfâ€"

Eret's legs almost go out when Hiccup hurls himself into Eret's ample chest, pawing at mighty arms, lips crushing his own with a frenzied passion. Eret's rough hands squeeze Hiccup's rear and wow, the kiss becomes \_obscene\_. Powerless to control the shiver that runs up and down his spine, Eret scrapes his teeth along Hiccup's tongue. Driving them forward, until they collapse on Eret's bed, Eret waits for Hiccup to wriggle until he splays himself in a comfortable position.

"For the record," Hiccup muses, "I've neverâ€|done anything like this with a guy. Astrid and I kissed and weâ€|used our hands on each other but not much else. I guess I'll let you know when or if I want to stop, just, please, we could be kissing right now and I'm a patient guy, or so I'd like to thinkâ€"

Hiccup yelps when Eret pounces on top of him, straddling the youth's thighs, capturing his wrists and pinning them above his head.

"Oh..." Hiccup wheezes, breathlessly, "You can manhandle me, by all means. I don't have a problem with that."

Eret gently bites Hiccup's bottom lip before prodding his tongue between Hiccup's mouth. Hiccup obliges and they find a fixed cadence for their kiss. Eret licks the roof of Hiccup's mouthâ€"something he knows by know makes the boy squirm in agonizing delightâ€"and he scolds himself for letting his hands dwell passively until now.

Callous hands (much bigger than Hiccup's slender ones) follow the contours of Hiccup's jaw, trace the shell of his ear (this decision rewards him a tiny gasp) and then impatiently slides his fingers underneath the hem of Hiccup's woven tunic.

Hiccup mewls in approval when Eret's fingers dart across his soft belly. The air is dense with exhilaration, predominately from the heat of the two bodies scrambling to grope one another. Eret yanks his fur shawl over his head and tosses it on the floor, followed by his layer of cloth underneath. He licks his lips and observes the winded, reddened young man resting beneath his weight.

"You, uh, have a lot of scars," Hiccup starts, nonchalantly, likely flustered from the sight of the half naked man above him. "Not a lot, I mean, not too many. Just the right amount."

Hiccup attempts to fling the tunic from his torso and fails miserably. Jitter hands render him any flexibility. Eret hastily shoves the cloth over Hiccup's head and flings it across the room.

"Look at you," Eret purrs, incredulously.

"Yup, look at me. Here I am, in the fleshâ€"\_Ooh\_."



After placing hot, wet kisses along his neck, Eret treks to the lad's jugular, outlining the Adam's apple with long, feral licks. Hiccup exhales piercingly and Eret responds by dragging his teeth down his throat until they land on his collarbones and then his chest. Blistering lips, teeth, and tongue scorch the soft, pale skin with delicate, teasing friction.

Nips, nibbles and kisses are strewn across Hiccup chest and an airy gasp is torn from his throat when Eret swipes his clever tongue against stiff nipples.

"Like that, do you?" Eret inquires.

Concocting a response is not an easy task when one is overwhelmed by an onslaught of foreign and electrifying stimulus so Hiccup's lack of verbalization—"aside from laden whines"—is anticipated.

Men are not often sensitive there, Eret notes, so this is certainly a \_valuable\_ discovery. Eret doesn't recognize the growl rumbling from the cusp of his vocals when he shifts, accidentally brushing against Hiccup's growing hardness.

Lips suckle at pink, responsive nipples and Hiccup is unfit to process the ambush of indescribable pleasure. Back arched, knees bent, leg twitching frenetically, Hiccup solicits through bruised, dampened lips, "\_Please\_."

Eret hums, indifferently, ignoring the young man's request, taking his time, gently kissing the trail of hair surrounding his belly button and stopping abruptly at the hem of his pants. He tugs them off in one swift yank. Hiccup is fully naked and it's everything he could have hoped for.

Hiccup stares at him with dilated pupils, brimming with hunger. His striking lad smiles, nervously, biting his lip in anticipation. His cock is so hard, so \_swollen\_. Hiccup's lips part in soundless pleasure as Eret's flat tongue licks the underside of his cock, before curling his lips deliberately over his teeth, and sucking him in a steady rhythm. The sensation of Eret's hot, wet velvet mouth causes Hiccup to hold his breath.

The valiant leader not \_squeal\_ (or so he'd probably deny if Eret teases him for it later) when Eret takes him in the back of his throat, progressing his slow, hollowed sucks into rigorous contractions.

"Oh," Hiccup whimpers. "Oh, \_Freyja\_. I can't—" \_oh\_."

Hiccup clumsily spreads his legs wider and angles his hips carefully so he can behold the sight of his stiff flesh enjoying such lavish attention. Eret glances upwards to see Hiccup's facial features contort and scrunch from torturous pleasure.

Bit by bit, more of him disappears past skillful lips to be welcomed by a muscular stroke of a cruel and talented tongue. When Hiccup's breath resurfaces it's in thick groans, the only articulation he's able to produce. Occasionally, Hiccup stifles any noise he makes, embarrassed by the helpless whines dribbling from his throat.

Eret sucks nearly his entire length into his mouth and throat, slides

it in and out of his hold, and then repeats the process. Scrambling to clutch at blankets, Hiccup wails, pulsing and throbbing against his caress.

The boy doesn't have a lot of experience. His reactions are graceless, blundering, and he seems bashful about the noises bubbling from his lips; it's as if he's never known just how incredible someone else could make him feel. Hiccup truly has no idea that all of this just makes him even more desirable and it's actually doubling Effort's efforts to finish him off.

The lad's heels (well, the non metallic one) dig into crumpled sheets, his toes curled, the muscles in his abdomen taut and trembling. With a few more stable pulsations, Hiccup's back arches off the bed, head tossed back, legs shaking, as he cries out sharply, his orgasm consuming him with one final, violent shudder.

After swallowing the remains of Hiccup's release, Eret immediately crawls forward to greet the speechless young man. His mouth is still parted from the aftershock of unfeasible bliss and he emits tiny whimpers; pretty, red lips raw and flushed from orgasm, sweat accumulating across his brow, brunet locks clinging to his clammy forehead.

"Wow," he sighs. "How did youâ€"with yourâ€"all the wayâ€"?"

"Practice," Eret chuckles. He kisses Hiccup hard on the mouth, making sure to share the taste still lingering on his tongue.

"I want to. Let me," Hiccup manages through airy pants.

"What?"

Eret is caught off guard when Hiccup nudges his side, motioning for them to flip their positions. They roll over so Hiccup is looming over him.

"Hiccup," Eret says, racked with amusement. He can't fathom how Hiccup was able to harness such energy.

"What? I want to touch you. If that's okay."

Eret's own excitement has lessened (he figured they were finished for the night). Blood rushes quickly, back to his groin when he fully comprehends the sight of Hiccup naked, sitting on top of him.

"I justâ€"\_mmmâ€"" \_Hiccup shifts his weight and rubs himself against Eret's groinâ€""don't want you to feel obligated."

"It's alright," Hiccup says. "I want to."

So Eret lets Hiccup gape intently at Eret's half naked build, sighing contentedly when he rakes slim fingers down his broad chest.

"You're really, I mean wow," Hiccup remarks, skimming over powerful musculature.

It's not a reaction Eret is unfamiliar with. Hiccup pulls Eret's

trousers down and stares at the engorged flesh, unsure what to do.

"It's alright," Eret explains. "Just take your time. It's likeâ€¦doing it to yourself."

Hiccup nods. He wraps his fist around the base of Eret's hardness and instantly proceeds to pump it furiously.

"Ow!" Eret yelps in twisting and recoiling from the dry and painful friction.

"I'm sorry!" Hiccup cries out. "I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to hurt you. Should I stop?"

He jerks his hands away, terrified to learn what a great source of distress they've crafted.

"No," Eret says, "It's alright. It's alright Hiccup. Forget what I said, don't do it like you do it to yourself. Just grasp it gently at first and move it slowly."

"Okay. I can do that. I think."

Hiccup brows crease together and a bit of his tongue stick out of the corner of his lip. This newfound determination is really quite charming. He tries again, coiling hand carefully around Eret's erection, this time with considerate and tender strokes.

"\_Yes\_," Eret growls, "Like that."

Hiccup's hand glides slickly up and down the shaft and he pauses to explore the head of the penis, circling its brim and rubbing the slit with his thumb. Eret generates deep, rasping moans that come out a sounding more feeble than he anticipates.

While it's true he's shared his bed once with Ruffnut since moving to Berk, it's been so long since he's been touched like this; with such thoughtful, curious tugs. Eret isn't picky when it comes to choosing a partnerâ€¦he's enjoyed both pretty young women and menâ€¦but none of them compare to Hiccup. During his evening with Ruffnut, noticed her hair smelled of fish oil, which made for an...unusual fling, to the say the least. He's still too afraid to ask why she coats her hair in fish oil.

"You're, uh, really handsome," Hiccup falters, concentrating on the well-endowed appendage within his grasp.

"And you're gorgeous," Eret puffs, bucking his hips to meet Hiccup's steady strokes.

"I don't know if that's an adjective I would ascribe to myself," Hiccup objects, modestly. "I-I mean no one has ever used that term to illustrate my appearance. Sorry, am I talking too much? I've never done this before so I don't know if I'm doing something wrong."

"Hiccup, I don't want you to stop talking, I justâ€¦maybe talk about something else? I want to hear your voice. Focus on you and me."

"I can do that. Probably. What should I say?"

Preferably, Eret thinks, filthy descriptions that he's not sure Hiccup is comfortable with just yet. Eret succeeds in creating full sentences, although it's difficult to so through heavy grunts and moans.

"Tell me about how good you feel. Tell me how much you enjoy all of this. It will help me feel incredible if you do."

"Oh," Hiccup chirps. "Well, Iâ€¦I like this a lot. You're veryâ€¦girthyâ€¦no I mean, you have a lot of girth to you. Ugh. I mean to sayâ€¦"

Hiccup frustration results in an astonishing increase of rapid pumps. The chief's confidence returns when the outcome of his quickened force propels Eret's body into writhing, hot mess. Eret whines and drives his hips upward to match Hiccup's relentless thrusts.

"I've thought about this! A lot. I'veâ€¦I've had dreams about you touching me andâ€¦I sometimes wake up andâ€¦" He gulps, terrified by the notion of admitting his desire aloudâ€¦"I'm so hard. I think about you when I touch myself."

"Gods, yes, \_yes\_, keep going."

"I like to pretend that it's your hands that are all over me. I think about what'd it be like to have your body on top of mine."

Eret can feel himself growing closer and closer to reaching his final peak of ecstasy.

"I have to stuff a pillow in my face to make sure I don't' make too much noise because it feels so good and it's so hard \_not\_ to moan because I can't stop thinking about you. Ever. And I don't want to wake anyone up. Frankly, I should move out and find a new place to live, anyway. Right, staying on topic. Sorry."

Eret's toes cramp from curling so compactly.

"Sometimes I evenâ€¦I use my fingers. Iâ€¦I do it because I try really hard to imagine it's you inside me. I kind of want you to be inside me someday."

Odin, have mercy.

Eret comes with his eyes screwed shut. His seed erupts and dribbles down Hiccup's forearm. Hiccup brings his wrist to his mouth and a hesitant tongue darts out to sample the familiar substance.

"You'll kill me, you git." Eret protests. "Come here."

Brawny arms embrace the smaller man and bring him closer, until Hiccup is lying snug against Eret's chest. They lounge in one another's warmth for what seems like forever. He didn't count on falling asleep with Hiccup, he thinks, as fights to keep his eyes open, but it would be rude to kick him and his Night Fury out, especially in this frigid weather. He convinces himself that this is the reason he hugs the lad even more securely.

Outside, the wind rattles, hisses, and shakes gloomily as tiny flakes of ice and snow begin to collect on the dampened soil.

\* \* \*

><p>I love writing awkward sex scenes and oh no, winter is coming. Also, fall semester is starting soon so if I disappear without a trace for a while, well, now you now why. :c<p>

## 5. Chapter 5

Eret registers the cool draft seeping in from the cracks of the window when he awakes. Chilly, iced wind pricks his exposed skin, racking his body with shivers. The only thing keeping him warm is the thin body lying next to him. Eret bustles, looks outside the window, and sure enough, a wild flurry of snowflakes twist, turn and dance across the sky. The first snowfall isn't a gentle coating of white, fresh blankets piling the soil; it's a tumultuous storm. Ushering the heavy flakes of ice and snow is a fierce, howling wind.

Groaning, not wanting to part himself from Hiccup's warm body, Eret folds his arms around the young lad and buries his face in the crook of his freckled neck. Hiccup is curled up, his back snug against Eret's front. He watches the smaller form rise and fall with each breath.

Falling back asleep was Eret's initial plan but he jolts upright when his bedroom door swings wide open.

"Astrid!" Eret shrieks, an octave higher than he thought was physically possible. This outburst, of course, startles Hiccup awake and he too, yelps, "Astrid!" while scrambling for his clothes—mortified when he realizes they're at least a foot away from him and he's entirely naked.

Eret is thankful that he at least kept his underwear on. He's not shy; he's very comfortable in his own skin, if not bit prideful. He's not sure how Astrid snuck into his home without leaving any trace of a footprint. Stealth was just another one of Astrid's many talents, evidently.

The Viking woman stands in his doorway, her hood still pulled over her head. There are bits of snow on her shoulders and she's shuddering violently from the unforgiving weather.

"H-Hiccup," she announces, through chattering teeth, "Th-the ocean is f-freezing over and there's a s-supply ship s-stuck."

"I'll get dressed and I'll be outside. Give me less than ten minutes," Hiccup promises. Flushed, alarmed, and not any less mortified, Hiccup slides off the bed, binding a downy blanket around his waist, embarrassed to expose himself to either party.

"Astrid, how did you know where Hiccup was?"

Hiccup is on his hands and knees, collecting his tunic, boot, and armor.

Astrid says, "I saw you two leave the Great Hall together, hand in

hand. It wasn't hard to connect the dots."

"I figured you'd all be too drunk to notice," Hiccup whines.

"You're needed, too, Eret," Astrid commands. "We need all the help we can get. Hurry up! This is an emergency!"

Astrid throws her hands in the air, frustrated, watching the two men stumble and search for their clothing while concurrently trying to avoid indecency.

"Okay, okay," Hiccup panics, reaching for his underwear.

"I'll wait outside," Astrid replies, roughly. There's worry in her voice. Everyone was prepared for the first snowfall but no one could have predicted a freak storm.

\* \* \*

><p>The temperature is blistering and the frost bites at any fraction of skin they've left uncovered. Bundled up, from head to toe, Hiccup's crew (as well as Valka,) drive through harsh currents. Whiteout conditions obscure vision but luckily, Toothless can travel while relying on sound. Plasmid fuel bursts from the Night Fury's throat and each blast reverberates, specifying the route he must take. The others—"Astrid, Snotlout, Fishlegs, the twins, and Valka"—follow Hiccup's lead, mimicking the makeshift course.<p>

"I can see the ship!" Hiccup hollers, descending from great heights. He waves for the team to approach the vessel.

Eret sucks in a sharp breathe as he and Skullcrusher lower themselves from the fog, edging closer towards the water. Berk's riders are bestowed with a dreadful sight; the vessel is trapped, surrounded by sheets of ice. As they increase their proximity, Eret notices that there are at least four members aboard, though they're covered in furs. Their identities are unreadable and the only signs of life are desperately flailing arms.

Scorching flecks of ice pelt angrily against Eret's cheeks. They dive lower until they circle the ship's mast, meters above. Hail smacks their bodies from every angle, and the forceful wind provides a turbulence that makes it nearly impossible for the dragons to hover properly. Skullcrusher is knocked off balance every so often and not even his powerful wings can help him maintain equilibrium. Eret clutches to his dragon and every time they're pushed and shoved askew by the forceful streams of air, he prays he doesn't slip and fall.

"We're here to help you!" Hiccup bellows, hands cupped around his mouth, hoping this will allow his voice to reach them over the sound of the screeching, Nordic winds.

"What's your plan?" Eret asks. "Are any of the supplies salvageable?"

Hiccup proclaims, "We're going to save the crew first then we'll get to the supplies."

"Hiccup, there's not enough time to rescue both," Valka opposes,

her voice hollow and fraught. "The storm is much worse than we thought it'd be. I don't think anyone can last much longer in this cold."

"Valka's right," Astrid says. "We need to make this as quick as possible. There's no way we'll have time to carry any of provisions and our dragons are struggling enough as it is."

Hiccup tenses and though most of him is concealed, Eret can see his shoulders scrunch upright, his hands furling and tightening their grip on the Night Fury's neck. Every fiber of Hiccup's being is telling him to object and Eret knows this. Nothing frightens a chief more than a village with no food, no water, and no furs or pelts.

"Okay," Hiccup agrees, forsaken with surrender. "We can't just leave them here."

Thankfully, there are four people and eight riders, which leaves more than enough room. Hiccup directs Valka, Astrid, and Eret to join him and jump on the deck, while the others watch them closely, protect them, and provide a net of safety in case something goes wrong.

And Eret really, really, hopes nothing goes wrong. Their dragons fluttering above; they can't risk testing the amount of weight this ship can hold and Skullcrusher is exceptionally massive.

"Come with us," Hiccup speaks to them, gently, yet firmly, extending his palm.

The four traders gawk at him with fearful eyes. "\_C'est un monstre!\_" a woman's voice cries, pointing to the dragons rotating from afar.

"These traders are foreign," Hiccup says, turning to his mother, hopelessly. "They don't know about domesticated dragons."

But Eret recognizes the language. In fact, he recalls it quite well, once his panic subsides. He's done his fair share of travel and he's no linguistics expert but he can spot a familiar tongue.

"Hiccup, they're French. I can talk to them, I know French!"

"Oh, thank you, Eret," Hiccup wails in relief. "Thank you."

"\_Je suis là pour vous aider\_," Eret proffers, raising his arms in surrender. The merchants look to one another and nod. Despite their apprehension, it would be unwise to stay in this blizzard any longer, so they clamber for a ride back to safety.

Valka, Astrid and Hiccup escort the three men, encouraging them to climb aboard. The woman steps carefully for Eret and his Rumblehorn, only to slip on a patch of ice stretched among the ship's planks.

She cries out, toppling overboard, sliding across the layers of ice, whimpering as she gathers herself at last, on her hands and knees.

"Eret, wait!" Hiccup shouts, but it's too late. Eret mimics her fall,

easing himself onto the glacial sheets. Stress begins to unfold; the ice can't hold the burden of her limbs. In retrospect, Eret's plan was careless and not at all well conceived. He leaps towards her, pushing her out of the way. Her weight is replaced with Eret's weight, which is far heavier.

Ice crackles from immense pressure. It all happened so quickly, Eret doesn't have time to register his foot slipping into the arctic sea. Piece by piece, fractures of ice give in, break apart, and form a gap large enough to swallow his body whole.

The sub-zero water is an armada of tiny pins and needles, piercing his body, stabbing, prickling his skin, and sucking the air from his lungs. Eret is a thrashing, wounded animal, fighting to thrust his head above the surface. He claws at the borders of ice but every time he tries to pull himself up, the current of the ocean drags him back under. Fighting back against the tides of the sea is a fruitless endeavor. Eret isn't stronger than the ocean's natural, rhythmic currents.

Eret's body is numbed and weakened by the freezing water. Eventually, the strength to propel towards land ebbs away and he's unsure if his friends are screaming for him. Is he imagining their cries? Is it even possible to distinguish those sounds over the howling skies, the water rushing and pounding in his ears, like a blood rushing through veins?

His movements become sluggish and Eret, losing the ability to think rationally—almost forgetting he's underwater—opens his mouth and gulps in handfuls of seawater. Choking, suffocating, his surroundings dampen and darken. The salt from the ocean throbs and pricks at his eyes, so he closes them.

Eret recalls his mother. He left his mother when he was nineteen, to sail across Europe, searching for illicit treasures, and then, gradually, joining business of dragon trapping. She was so ashamed. It's not what Eret, his father, would have wanted, she scolded, the night before Eret set out for his latest destination. He should have never left her. He should have turned back one last time to see his mother's face. They have not spoken since. Would she ever find out about the death of her estranged son?

A shriek—one that can belong to a Rumblehorn—rings so loudly, it breaks the barrier of the storm's wails and moans. Eret cannot see, but he can feel Skullcrusher's rugged proboscis probe and jostle his sinking weight.

Two hands pound at Eret's chest. Warm lips press against his and his head is suddenly lifted up, throat barred. Snapping his eyes open still requires energy that the cold has robbed from him. He coughs up water, sputters, and air fills his battered lungs.

Voices fill his head. He's sure they must be real, just as real as the arms holding him securely. Faint words drift in and out of focus. Eret tries to concentrate on what he suspects is Hiccup's voice but simpler dreams sustain most of his attention.

"Please," is all he can make out while confined to his muddled stupor. "Please," and "\_Stay with me\_."



\* \* \*

><p>Eret envisions heat; no longer is he trapped in the eye of a storm. He relaxes peacefully, in a bed of tall grass. Sunlight beams down on him and across the field, rabbits dig into the earth's soil. They're creating a new home for their families.<p>

They burrow, huddle together, at night to stay warm. Soft, sweet, floppy eared rabbits snuggling against one another, heat radiating from their silky fur. Eret's body sinks slowly into the soil. The terrain is protecting him, offering him a new home too. He can be warm, full, and be free from hardship.

Floorboards creak sinisterly under Eret's anxious, pacing feet. He's in the captain's quarters. It's nothing short of exquisite; a bed, a desk, where the captain's log is stored, and a small boudoir.

"You wanted to see me?" Eret asks, carefully, ensuring that there is no waver in his voice. He isn't as strong as he thinks he could be, but he can't let it show. No one is as strong as they think they are in the eyes of Drago Bludvist.

Drago sits at his desk, hands folded neatly in his lap. He remains relatively composed, which is more frightening than witnessing Drago at his most vindictive. Eret knows what to expect during Drago's blood thirsty tantrums. What he cannot fathom is what Drago is capable of at his most calculated, poised, and thoughtful candor.

"Do you know why I chose you, Eret son of Eret?"

"Yes, sir," Eret recites. "Because I'm willing to go to great lengths to supply you with whatever it is you ask of me."

Drago doesn't laugh like a normal, rational person does. There's never been any tenderness in Drago's laughter, no, that was not within the realms of possibilities. The same day Drago Bludvist bore a portion of mercy was the same day that RagnarÅk commenced.

Drago chuckles, uncaringly, rising from his seat. A wide, tall, barrel-chested husk of a man creeps towards him until Eret can count every dreadlock, every pore, and every scar etched into his skin, if for some bizarre reason, he wanted to, he could.

"Don't be modest, boy."

"Sorry."

Eret swallows hard. Drago follows the movements of Eret's throat, fixating on the way it trembles and shakes when he gulps. He's pleased to see his presence has instilled such fear, the tiny, curl tugging at the corner of his lips tells him this.

"I chose you because I've roamed the continents, searching for the best dragon trapper fit to serve me. You promised me an army."

Eret nods, averting his gaze when Drago leans in to draw their faces close together, too close for Eret's comfort; a sign of supremacy. Eret is meant to feel ranks below the madman. When Drago breathes, Eret smells his breath: it reeks of curdled milk and fish.

"So then, why have you returned empty handed?"

Eret clears his throat and says, "If you'll allow me to explain"

"You know I don't like long winded explanations."

"Drago, we had to abandon the ship. You've seen the storms brewing from the north. Our vessel was capsizing. I had to release the dragons in order to lighten the load, and save my crew from drowning."

"So you chose your crew."

"Yes."

Drago scoffs and grins, deceitfully, jeering, "You have too much faith in people."

"Drago, without a crew, I can't deliver."

"You could've gotten a new one."

"Drago"that's not"they're good men and they have families to feed."

But it's useless. Drago doesn't care, why would he? How could he? Eret reels backwards when Drago withdraws a knife from the straps encircling his waist, underneath his tunic. He runs a finger along the knife's blade and bares his teeth.

"Allow me to help rid you of this empathy you've been burdened with."

The edge of the blade slivers down his chest, slowly, before pressing down to slice open susceptible flesh.

\* \* \*

><p>Awaking from his nightmare, Eret finds himself drenched in sweat. He hoists himself up but it knocks the wind out of him, so he falls back down. Every inch of his being feels weak, lifeless, and his limbs are heavy piles of bricks that refuse to budge. Eret groans, in despair. The snout of a dragon prods his side.<p>

Eret spins, legs tangled in crinkled bed sheets, facing his companion; the last thing he saw before losing consciousness.

"Skullcrusher," he greets, hoarsely. "Friend, oh, I'm so glad to see you."

The gentle giant expresses his concern by warbling softly, coating Eret's face with wet licks. Too weary to laugh, Eret settles on bidding his dragon a faint grin.

"You saved me, boy," Eret notes, aloud. "You pulled me from the water."

There's a scuffle of frantic footsteps and then his bedroom door bursts open. It's Astrid, carrying a tray that includes a bowl of soup and a mug of tea.

"Eret!" Astrid squeals. "I heard you from the other room. You're awake!"

The blonde pauses her excitement to place the tray on his nightstand, thus resuming her glee by flinging herself on top of him, throwing her arms around him.

"Astrid," Eret laughs, weakly, "What a lovely sight for these sore eyes."

Astrid squeezes him and apologizes profusely when her snakelike grip crushes his lungs.

"Eret, we didn't think you'd make it at first," she says with watery eyes. "You were trapped and we all rushed to pull you out but Skullcrusher dived in and caught you by the collar andâ€¦he brought you to us."

Sniffing, Astrid continues, "We were so scared we had lost you. Hookfang used his body heat to warm you up and if it weren't for Snotlout, you would have frozen to death."

Eret raises a shaky hand to pat the back of her head. Finally regaining her composure, Astrid parts from their embrace and says, "I'm just so glad you're safe, Eret. I bought you some tea. Valka said it's supposed to fight off any nasty colds or fevers you might be vulnerable to. It will make you really drowsy, just a fair warning."

She brings the warm cup to his lips and he sips the mixture of herbs, coughing violently from the liquid's bitter taste. Astrid smiles, sheepishly, and explains, "Sorry. It's not supposed to be tasty. The soup will help wash it down."

"Where's Hiccup? Are the others alright?"

"Everyone is fine," Astrid consoles. "Hiccup was in here, earlier, while you were still asleep. He seemed upsetâ€¦don't tell him I said that. Right now, he and Valka are finding a place for the merchants to stay. They'll leave as soon as the storm subsides."

"Is the woman alright? The woman I helped?"

"She's doing well. I think her name is Mirabelle? I can't understand what they were saying but the others kept referring to her as 'Mirabelle'."

Eret sighs, flooded with waves of relief. Astrid keeps him company until the effects of the tea kick in and he falls into a state of serene unconsciousness.

\* \* \*

><p>After another undisturbed slumber, Eret wakes to a new set of voices. Astrid is gone. Hiccup and Valka take her place, watching over him. The tea has rendered him hazed and lethargic. Eret's

eyelids are heavy and immovable so he decides it's best to try falling asleep again.<p>

It doesn't feel right to overhear the conversation Hiccup and his mother are having; its unintentional eavesdropping. He can't do much to object with such little energy, however, so he lies in his nest of warm blankets, grateful to at least hear Hiccup's voice.

"It's my fault," Hiccup chokes. He is seated on a stool next to Eret's bed. A thin hand rests on Eret's thigh, protectively.

"Hiccup," Valka sighs, "There's nothing you could have done. No man can overcome nature's fury."

"I should have stopped him from following that woman. There could have been a safer way to rescue her."

"Surely, you know how foolish that sounds."

"How?"

"You would have done the same as him."

"I guess you're right."

A long, pensive silence perseveres.

"You care for him," Valka remarks, quietly.

"Mom, no, it's not like thatâ€"

"I was there, Hiccup. I saw the way you cradled him in your arms. I can see how you look at him now, as he rests."

"Mom, pleaseâ€|."

"Are you ashamed to fall for him? Please don't thinkâ€"it's not wrong that you're both menâ€"

"That's neverâ€|bothered me. Berk doesn't turn people away for something like that. I've heard that some lands do."

"Then why are you so afraid, son?"

"I don't know if it's what dad would've wanted."

Eret follows the trail of Valka's steps. She moves to join her son. He hears her exhale slowly.

"You've known your father for twenty years. He would've loved you all the same, just as he loves Goebber."

The grip on his thigh tightens. He can hear the falter in Hiccup's voice. Valka does, too, so she places a tender kiss on her son's forehead.

"It's not that. I want to honor him, for everything he's done for us. I just hope he would've approved of Eret."

"I'm sure he would, had he gotten the chance to bond with him. Eret is a noble lad. Handsome, too."

"\_Mom\_!"

Valka snickers at her son's flustered outburst.

"Mom?"

"Yes, dear?"

"I'm really sorry. I'm sorry for everything. I've been a jerk to you, lately."

"I know, Hiccup. I'm sorry, too."

She leaves, though Eret can't approximate when because he's drifting in and out of sleep. When it's just the two left, Hiccup climbs atop Eret's build, huddling close.

\* \* \*

><p>Eret isn't sure how much time has passed but he stirs, rubs his eyes, and accounts the gangly build cover his. Hiccup had either forgetent to wake himself or he had planned on spending the night with Eret. With any luck, it's the latter.<p>

"Good morning," Eret says, brushing a lock of hair from the young man's face.

Hiccup rouses, shifting angles so their stomachs align.

"Hi there," Hiccup murmurs. His hair is an absolute mess, his eyes droopy and weary. "What you did was incredibly stupid."

"I know."

"Brave but stupid and if I berate you some more that'll make me a hypocrite. I would've done the same."

"It wouldn't be the first time I went out of my way to help a stranger. But more importantly, what will you do? Without the supplies?"

Hiccup's brows furrow in absorption and he says, "I have a plan B. I didn't want to have to resort to it. Do you know about Outcast Island?"

"No, I've just barely familiarized myself with Berk,"

"Well, I have, er, not friend per say, but an ally. He's changed, over time; he used to be Berk's enemy. I hate asking for helpâ€"

"A little bit of assistance won't kill you."

"I know, I just.."

"You just what?"

"I don't know. Maybe my dad would have found away to recover those

supplies."

"Hiccup."

Eret takes the lad's face into his hands and bores into brilliant, emerald eyes.

"Look at me. You have done nothing wrong. You had no idea the storm would be as dire as it was. You did what you could with what little time you had. You chose human lives above all and like you said, there are other alternatives."

Hiccup bites his lip his gaze darts elsewhere.

"I was so scared that I had lost you."

"I've survived the rage of a sadistic war lord. A little bit of cold won't rid me from this world."

Hiccup snorts and buries his face into Eret's chest. "This is the second night we've spent together," Hiccup states.

"This one didn't result in undressing you."

"It still can. I'm free until noon. Waitâ€"no. No, I really can't. I mean, I want to! But I have toâ€" "

"Hiccup, I'm just teasing. It's alright."

He laughs, thumbing the side of Hiccup's face, skin rutting pleasantly against fresh stubble. Callous digits map out the cut of his jaw; his pointed chin, eventually brushing past his soft lips. Gods, he was stunning. Absolutely stunning.

"I'm sorry about your suit," Hiccup blurts, unexpectedly, prying Eret away from swooning like a lovesick adolescent.

"What?"

"I've been so busy preparing for winter so I haven't had time to work on your suit. I'm sorry."

"No worries. Really. Don't let me hold you up."

Hiccup parts, rolling off the bed, landing miraculously on his feet. The last time Hiccup took a stab at this maneuver, he tripped and fell. Kudos to him.

"I don't want you to work today. Just take it easy."

"Hiccup, I'm feeling a lot better."

"Please, just give it a day."

"Whatever you say, chief."

\* \* \*

><p>Ultimately, Eret is refreshed sometime in the afternoon. He abides by Hiccup's commands and enjoys leisurely pursuits: he doesn't

fly with Skullcrusher, much to his dragon's disappointment, but he takes the liberty of grooming his companion. The least he can do is pamper his friend after having saved his life.<p>

When dinnertime arrives, Eret is bombarded by a group of nosy young dragon riders, beckoning him to sit with them. He certainly doesn't mind the conversation; it's better than being confined to a bed all day. The merchants greet him before they depart, shake hands, thank him profusely and Mirabelle rushes up to him, throwing her arms around his neck. Without her gear and furs, she reveals a youthful face, albeit a weary one. Her hair is the color of smoldering fire.

"\_Merci, merci merci\_" She cries.

"\_Soyez le bienvenu\_" Eret wheezes, seeking oxygen.

"The man who nearly froze to death!" Astrid cheers, waving her drink about as Eret sits across from her. "We should make a toast."

"There's no need, really," Eret declines, chewing on a bit of chicken leg. He can't remember the last meal he had.

"Tell us what it was like!" Ruffnut pries, excitedly. "What did freezing to death and drowning feel like?"

Astrid shoots her friend a glare and says, "You don't have to dignify that with a response, Eret."

"But you \_should\_" Tuffnut suggests, eagerly. "I had an uncle once who almost died from the cold. Before he was rescued, he said he started taking his clothes off because he felt hot and he started hallucinating about summertime."

"It harrowing. There, I hope that sums it up. I'm luckily Snotlout was there."

Snotlout, who had been silent until now, gapes, startled, scratching the back of his neck. "Yeah, well, whatever," he mumbles, bashfully. "It's not a big deal."

Astrid stifles her laughter. They continue their feast, a majority of their exchanges remaining uninterrupted until the door to the Great Hall opens and slams shut, and Hiccup comes hobbling onwards.

"Everything alright?" Astrid inquires, noting that the chief was wholly out of breath.

"Yes," Hiccup puffs, bracing himself over the table, hands clutching the wooden surface's edge. "Waitâ€"no. It's not okay."

Hiccup is met with an array of quizzical expressions, from each and every member of his team. Astrid's eyebrow arcs as she opens her mouth to speak, promptly shutting it. They've been acquainted since childhood and he's sure there are some things Astrid prefers not to know.

"Eretâ€" "

"Yes?" Eret pipes up.

"I need your help. With important things. I need your assistance. With"er"at the smithy. It's urgent. Urgent Chief"thing"Chief emergency."

Eret sets aside his utensils and joins Hiccup outside, giving Astrid a simple shrug. Neither men see her roll her eyes as they depart.

\* \* \*

><p>"What was so important that you took me away from my dinner?" Eret complains.<p>

Eret lurches forward when Hiccup grabs his forearm and they sprint to the side of the building. It's empty, ducked far away into a tightly knit corner; a cluster of snow dusted trees and shrubbery shields them

"Hiccup," Eret begins, "what are you"

Hiccup seizes the older man by his biceps, shoving him against the wall. Eret grunts, taken aback by the forceful blow. His back is not graced with a comforting support, only the structure's wooden exterior.

"Hiccup, for gods sake, what is going o"

Hiccup mashes their lips together in a bruising, furious kiss. Gasping, Eret kisses him back, hands snaking around the boy's lithe waist.

"Out here?" Eret hisses. "Hiccup, there are people inside."

"Eret, I almost lost you. You're here and you're safe and you're alive. I want your hands all over me. I want you to touch me and kiss me and hold me. Please."

Hiccup takes Eret hand and gently guides it down to groin, beckoning him to cup his growing arousal.

Eret buries his nose in auburn hair: he isn't sure what it smells like this time but it's tinged with sweat and a musk that's intoxicating, that sends a violent shudder down his backside.

"I didn't think you were that dirty," Eret teases, exhaling into soft tresses.

"I'm not dirty!" Hiccup halts, lowering his voice, whispering, "\_I'm not dirty\_. I just thought you'd like this, maybe. I don't know. I'm not a mind reader. I know you're experienced"

Hiccup gasps when Eret pinches his bottom. "Ow," he snarls. "That hurt."

Eret chuckles, soothing hands cupping Hiccup's rear. Hiccup squirms into his the firm grip.

"You do it on purpose. No one walks around sleeveless in this



weather. You just want to show off your muscular arms because you know how irresistible they are. Sometimes I don't think you're aware of how attractive you are."

"Oh, I'm aware."

"Come on," Hiccup urges. "Let's go some place warmer."

Clutching Eret's hand, Hiccup scurries to the forge, which, fortunately, isn't located too far. Hiccup tumbles through the entrance, slamming Eret into a stack of hay. Hiccup climbs atop him, frantically. There's no fire lit in the room, only the sweltering heat that sizzles and crackles when uncovered skin is tickled with hot breath and shaky digits.

The slim body is unrecognizably swift; a thrashing frolicsome entity that couldn't belong to Hiccup's untested nature.

"You're gorgeous," Hiccup exhales, his breath ghosting over Eret's collarbones. "So handsome. I'm sorry; I know I've said it so many times. I'm not sure what you're expecting. I'm not a poet or anything."

Eret hastily yanks his shirt off, snatching Hiccup's hands so they lay flat against Eret's chest. Sudden momentum bends Hiccup forward and he is perched enticingly, straddling Eret's thighs, back arched, hair tousled.

"There's no need to sweet talk me," Eret chortles.

"You didn't seem to mind it last time."

"Mmm, you're not wrong."

Deep sighs ooze from Eret's throat as Hiccup explores the contours of Eret's profile. Hiccup smiles, stupidly, fingers scraping along scarred flesh. He lifts his nose triumphantly when he brushes over receptive nipples, twirling them in a counterclockwise motion.

"You're going to kill me," Eret growls.

"You say that every time," Hiccup says. "You're just bluffing. It doesn't give me much incentive, to be perfectly honest."

"I don't know what's gotten into you, but I like it."

"I want to make you feel good. Can I?"

"Yes," Eret weeps, as Hiccup kisses down his navel, peeling his pants away, until the fabric no longer constricted results of his desire. Searing, tingling heat puddles in his abdomen when Hiccup slides onto the ground, kneeling before him.

"You don't need to do \_that\_," Eret instructs, propping himself on his elbows, trousers pooled around his ankles. "Really, don't do anything you're not comfortable withâ€"\_holy\_-\_Hiccupâ€"oh myâ€"\_."

Wasting absolutely no time, Hiccup licks a long stripe along the

pulsating erection. "Can you tell me what I should do?"

"Hiccup â€"Iâ€"w-well, why don't you try, ah, sucking at the head. J-just like that, \_yes\_."

Hesitant lips suckle at the head of Eret's cock while free hands stroke and fondle whatever is untouched by his mouth. Eret teaches him how he likes to be pleased with lips and tongue, instructing him through quaking breathes, mumbled requests. Not much of his length fits in Hiccup's inexperienced throat but the lad takes what he can, savoring the bits of sensitive hardness, tasting and surveying the salty substance dribbling from the slit.

"Remarkable," Eret says, gruffly, running his fingers through reddish-brown locks. "Damn prettiest thing I've ever seen. Your lips look perfect wrapped around my cock."

Hiccup is not accustomed to such filthy praise so it's no surprise when he whimpers around Eret's throbbing organ, using a free hand to rub his own excitement. "Stop," Eret rasps. "Come here."

Not nearly quickly enough, but steadily, nonetheless, Eret soon has Hiccup naked, lying taut against him. Fingers close around their girths, guiding them both into a slick rhythm. Hiccup whines into the slope of Eret's neck, trembling, weak from this unfathomable delight. Lips sear, crush together, as their erections glide in a fixed tandem.

"Gods, Hiccup," Eret moans, breaking the kiss. "You look wonderful when you're on top of me like this."

"Th-thank you," Hiccup says through a dry mouth, hips surging forward to match Eret's thrusts. "I think."

"What I wouldn't give to watch you bounce up and down on my cock."

Hiccup eyes are wide and raw with wonder. He lets out a strangled, wanton sob, eyes fastening shut, mewling, "Wow, that's kind of obscene."

"Was it too much?" Eret queries.

"No, no," Hiccup pants, knees turning to gelatin, nearly collapsing right then. "I might finish too soon if you say things like that, is all."

"That's the idea," Eret snorts. "Go on, keep thinking about it. Picture yourself riding me. Think about filling yourself with my thick cock, hitting you in the right place each and every time."

The grip around their lengths constricts. Lovely features crunching and contorting, Hiccup exudes a prolonged stream of swear words as his orgasm tears through him.

Semen spills, smothering the pair of quivering bellies. After he comes, Eret's laughs. His laughter end up sounding more like giggles, which he knows is silly and childlike but he really can't help himself.

"What?" Hiccup demands. "What's so funny?"

"That's the first time I've ever heard you cuss."

\* \* \*

><p>"You look anxious," Eret comments. Hiccup picks the clothes off the ground, fumbling idly, cursing under his breath when he realizes he put his shirt on backwards. Eret halfheartedly reaches over to hoist his pants up his legs.<p>

"I'm just nervous. I'm heading out for Outcast Island first thing tomorrow morning. Alvin and I are on peaceful terms but I'm not sure how well liked I am by the rest of his men."

"What's not to like?"

"Thanks. You think I'm charming but it's not you I need to convince to help feed an entire village."

"You've got a good crew to back you up. I'll put in a good word for you."

"Actually," Hiccup mutters, "About thatâ€¦"

"What?"

Trepidation slams into him like Thor's hammer, teeth sinking into his bottom lips. Tucking his tunic into his trousers, Hiccup exhales mournfully, staring at Eret with a look that borders on apologetic.

"I need you to stay put for a while. Not for too long, I promise you, but I don't want you flying with Skullcrusher."

Eret laughs, with very little traces of amusement, as he buttons his pants. "Hiccup, I'm not a child. You can't order me around like that."

"It's for your own good. I'm not going to endanger you."

"Excuse me?" Eret snaps, hopping off the stack of hay he'd been laying on, inching to read Hiccup's expression, a difficult feat to accomplish in this unlit hearth.

Hiccup's shoulders sagâ€"he does that gesture he always does when he's irritable, the wringing of his handsâ€"and he explains, peevishly, "You can't just take a few days off? After having a near death experience? Like any normal human being would?"

"We're not normal human beings, we're Vikings. We're a tough bunch."

An irritable cluck of his tongue indicates that Eret's defiance is wearing him down.

"Hiccup, I've healed. All is well. I'm twenty-five years old; I'm capable of taking care of myself. Don't do it for me."

"See, this is why I held off on telling you," Hiccup grumbles,

rubbing his temples.

"Hold on a moment, when were you planning on telling me this? Is this some sort of pity shag?"

"What? No, of course not!" Hiccup protests. "What happened just now has nothing to do with that, I just wanted to make you happy."

"Really poor timing on your part, then."

"Why do you need to make a big thing out of it?" Hiccup barks, thrusting his arms into the air with defeat.

"You really can't see why something like this would upset me a little?" Eret retorts, raking fingers through his hair in frustration.

"No," Hiccup says, folding his arms across his chest, in the most pompous tone he's ever heard come from the boy's otherwise amiable mouth.

"You couldn't stop me if I came along, anyhow," Eret spits in frustration. "I'm a grown man."

"I would recommend listening to the chief's orders."

"You are such a brat sometimes."

"And you're way too defensive! Geez, all of this because I'm concerned about your health."

"You can't protect me from harm!" Eret shouts. "You won't always be there to protect me, unless you plan on babysitting me around the clock! Your mother, Astrid, your friends, even Toothless: you wouldn't treat them this way so don't give me that excuse."

"That's different," Hiccup argues. "That's different and you know it."

"People are lost every day," Eret heaves in an exasperated sigh. "This won't change anything. I understand, you mean well, but it's about time you get over it."

After comprehending what he just said, Eret staggers backwards, expecting a slap across the face.

"Get over what, Eret?" Hiccup disputes, before Eret can apologize. Balled fists stick to his sides. It was as if Eret had angered a hissing, feral cat, its furs spiked along its arched back.

"That's not what I meant. Hiccup, that was stupid of me to say."

"What do I need to get over, Eret?" Hiccup challenges, again, his voice cracking. "Do I need to get over the fact that I nearly lost you? Do you want me to erase that memory from my brain? Should I just pretend I that wasn't holding your frozen body in my arms, praying to the gods for mercy? Begging for your life?"

"No," Eret murmurs. "No, not at all. Hiccupâ€"

"Or maybe," He sneers, backing away, heading for the door, his brow crumpled with disbelief. "I should get over my father's death, right? Isn't that what this all boils down to?"

"No," Eret gasps, "I would never. I'm sorry. I don't know why I said that. I'm so sorry. Hiccup, loveâ€"

The term of endearment softens them both, only temporarily. Regardless, he pivots, angrily, twisting the doorknob. A pregnant pause endures as Hiccup waits for a final statement.

"I can't risk losing people I care about."

Eret reaches for Hiccup's shoulder but he recoils from the gesture,

"Don't," Hiccup mumbles, inaudibly. "Just don't."

The hurt in his voice crumbles Eret's very core, shattering his resolve into tiny pieces. It was fair for enough for him to leave Eret like this. The door slams shut. Resigned to the damage he's caused, Eret wrathfully kicks a table stacked with weaponry.

\* \* \*

><p>I have no idea how insane my schedule will be for the next couple of months. I will try to update as often as I can. Class starts for me on Thursday, thus, I have provided you all with a very long chapter and a smut scene with some angst, in hopes that it will sustain your needs. Take care, readers! 3<p>

## 6. Chapter 6

Eret can spot his allies in the horizon and he tries hard not to break out into an overzealous grin. A few other Vikings wait, too, for they'll need help unloading whatever cargo it is they've returned with. He waves to his friends and they wave back, all except Hiccup. A sore and hollow brick weighs deep in his chest. He nearly forgot what an idiot he had been the previous night.

The team assembles, swooping into the soft sheets of snow with loud crunches. They all carry sacks worth of food, and some of the pelts that didn't fit are wrapped around their necks, arms, and waists.

"I see you took my advice," Hiccup greets in a tone much cooler than the frozen patches of ice under his feet. "Glad you slept in."

"Yes, well," Eret fumbles, "it only seemed right."

"Good," Hiccup says, flatly. He shrugs a heavy parcel of wheat over his shoulder and trudges off into the town's center, Toothless scampering alongside.

"I'll, uh, see you later, then," Eret calls, his voice trailing off as Hiccup's distance increases. "I hope."

Valka looks to her son, then to Eret, raising an eyebrow. Astrid

proffers a similar worrisome expression that's on the brink of suspicion.

"I'd like to know what happened," Eret says, relieving Astrid of some of the cargo bearing down on her, while simultaneously veering attention away from Hiccup's odd behavior.

Astrid sighs, "The trip went well, better than we expected. Alvin's crew was pretty skeptical and wary of us. But Alvin was a good friend of Stoick, all things considered."

"I hadn't seen him in over twenty years," Valka says, folding heaps of clothes over her arm. "You could imagine how confused he was to see a woman who had been presumed dead."

"He wasâ€¦ devastated," Astrid recalls, solemnly. "He said the least he could do is help protect Berk. He was more than happy to promise us that we won't go cold or hungry."

"It's what my son does best," Valka reflects. "He speaks. He empathizes. He considered how shocked Alvin must've felt."

Astrid nods, clearing her throat, anxiously. "I don't think it was too much fun for Hiccup, having to break the news."

\* \* \*

><p>Tracking down Hiccup and Toothless is fairly simple. He gives Hiccup some space, opting not to follow him right away, after receiving the cold shoulder. When everyone else finishes dividing supplies among families, the village quiets down.<p>

Eret ventures into the forest, able to discern the Night Fury's footprintsâ€”Hiccup leaves behind marks of a heavy boot in the fresh snow. It doesn't match the indentations that his metal peg leg creates.

"Go away," Hiccup says, when the trail comes to an end. Eret squeezes between jagged branches. He finds Hiccup leaning against his Night Fury. Black wings curl around him, lovingly, shielding him from the chilly wind.

"I'm still mad at you," Hiccup grumbles as Eret steps closer.

"And you have every right to be," Eret admits. "I'll leave, if that's what you want. I just wanted to see you. I need to know that you're alright."

"Your show of concern is a bit delayed. Really could've used it sooner, like, last night, for instance."

Eret backs away, prepared to retrace his steps back to the town's center.

"Wait," Hiccup sighs. "Don't go. Stay. Whatever."

Toothless seems content to have his friend snug against him; heat radiates from obsidian scales. The boy and his dragon stare into cloudy skies. There's another chance of snowfall, much to Berk's chagrin. Eret and Skullcrusher remain silent as they overlook the

world, from the cliff that Hiccup has chosen for temporary isolation.

Neither party member should be exposed to the frigid temperatures and Eret can't calculate how long Hiccup had been residing here. He should suggest going back to Meade Hall, where most Vikings are likely gathering around a smoldering, cackling fire, but Eret doesn't speak. He adheres to Hiccup's priorities; his eyes scan the oceans, the skies—"whatever else lies beyond"—and for a while they loll, serenely. The only noises rising into the crisp air are even breaths; reptilian purrs and grunts.

"I wish he were here," Hiccup speaks, finally, in a tone low enough to be indistinguishable. "He would know what to do."

"I know," Eret whispers.

"I should have told him sooner."

"Whom?"

"Alvin. I should have told Alvin about my dad. I don't know why I waited so long. I guess I was so caught up in my own problems, I didn't stop and think about how others might've felt."

"There's no right way to grieve."

"True," Hiccup mutters. He shivers, tersely, folding his arms across his chest. Toothless cloaks his warm, muzzle into Hiccup's side. The thoughtful indication provides Hiccup with brief protection from the arctic breeze.

"Gods know that I could've handled it better, though."

It's the first time Hiccup turns his head to maintain eye contact since this morning. Sorrowful, sunken eyes meet his. They're wet, red, leaking with despair.

"Are you crying?" Eret asks. He wills himself from reaching out and wiping the dripping residue from the corner of Hiccup's eye.

"No."

"I've seen you cry before, at your father's funeral. I wish I had comforted you back then, but we barely knew one another."

"It's just a mess, you know? Everything is going back to normal, or so you'd think, and it seems like things are looking up."

Hiccup shakes his head. "Then you have to explain it to someone else and you revisit those same feelings you had, that very same day, and it's—"its just—" "

Burying his hands in his face, Hiccup crumples, doubles over, and draws his knees close to his chest. No amount of comforting licks from Toothless can quell his sobs, but the dragon certainly doesn't stop trying. Hiccup mumbles something through his fingers.

"What was that?" Eret asks, gently.

Ragged breaths seep through trembling hands. Hiccup's body quivers as he rocks back and forth. Eret scoots nearer, dragging himself on his knees.

When there's no apparent response, Eret tries again, urging, "Please, you can tell me."

"I don't think I can do this," Hiccup blubbers. "Maybe I canâ€"noâ€"I mean yeah, I'm supposed to be a chief but maybe I'm just not meant to be a good one. Maybe I'm not strong enough."

"Look at me."

Hiccup nods, his face ascending from shaky palms. Tears trickle silently down freckled cheeks; a few pool in the corners of his quivering mouth. One particular wet trail slithers down his beck, dissipating around his collarbone. Every inch of his weary face is etched and taut with hopelessness.

"You're an incredible leader, Hiccup. Berk would've been destroyed without your guidance. No one else could have defeated Drago the way you did. Only you, Hiccup."

"I miss him," Hiccup says, and that's all he really needs to say. His eyes are twisted shut, lashes wet from the tears. "I miss him so much."

"I know, love."

Eret isn't prepared in the slightest when Hiccup flings himself into Eret's chest. He grabs the fur shawl draped along Eret's shoulders, veiling his face in the coarse hairs. "I'm sorry," Hiccup whimpers.

His voice is so tiny and frail and there's no way it can truly belong to Hiccup. The Hiccup that Eret remembers during Stoick's funeral was bold yet solemn: nervous yet unwavering. Though he had witnessed the chief cry, it was far from anything as wrecked as this.

Almost instinctively, Eret squeezes the body that whimpers within his possession. "It's alright," Eret soothes. "I've got you."

"I've got you, love," Eret repeats, as Hiccup breaks down, his resolve torn askew.

He's choking sobs into Eret's clothes. Hiccup doesn't want to cry; Vikings don't cry and chiefs certainly don't, either, but pain knows no bounds. The young man is at war with himselfâ€"no, at multiple wars with himself, but the one taking precedence is a ruthless brawl.

"I still think you're an idiot," Hiccup sniffs, scarcely audible.

Eret can't help but strangle out a tiny laugh. At least the lad's priorities are still in check.

"I can't fault you on that," Eret agrees.



Time isn't really a priority in this instance. All that matters to Eret is the shuddering body wailing bleakly around his arms. Eret will continue to provide comfort for as long as necessary.

In due course, Hiccup's tears subside. The weary lad looks up, pale, stricken, with bloodshot eyes.

"Does it ever stop hurting?" He asks, throatily.

Utilizing the opportunity to stroke Hiccup's hair, Eret answers, "Yes and no."

"That's not very reassuring."

Hiccup closes his eyes when Eret wipes a tear from his cheekbone. The poor soul is drained, worn; bushed from the ache that grief has sprung upon him.

"Let me put it this way," Eret explains, tenderly. "It takes time to heal from such a painful loss. A part of you will never truly heal and that's fine. In fact, it's perfectly natural. You'll store that small part inside of you, hold it close, and you'll always remember."

"Sounds like it really changes someone."

Eret tucks a lock of auburn hair behind Hiccup's ear, then pressing a tender kiss to his forehead.

"Doesn't it?"

Neither part from the embrace until grey clouds block out the sun, entirely, shrouding them in a menacing fog. The lack of sunlight results in lowering their body temperatures. Both men shake violently from the cold.

"I'm so tired," Hiccup mumbles.

"You didn't sleep well last night?"

"No, not after the fight."

When Eret hoists them upright, he's reluctant to remove himself from welcoming heat.

"Let me make it up to you."

"You don't want to open that window of opportunity, pal. Trust me. I have a long list of deeds that you'll need to complete before I welcome you into my good graces."

"Let me at least take you home."

\* \* \*

><p>After lighting the fireplace in the Haddock's residence, Hiccup motions Eret to join him upstairs. Skullcrusher plops down by the fire, growling irritably when Toothless attempts to rile him up, nipping him in the tail.<p>

"I don't think he's in the mood to play," Hiccup says. "Come on, bud."

Toothless obeys, hobbling behind Hiccup as they enter the bedroom. Hiccup removes his flight suit until he is stripped down to his tunic and trousers. Sighing dramatically, he collapses on his bed, throwing an arm over his face. Toothless mirrors that same artificial fatigue, crashing onto the floor and rolling around on his back.

"You'll be alright, then?" Eret confirms, heading towards the doorway.

There's a long pause that hints Hiccup's indecisiveness. At last, with a brow wrinkled from scrupulous thought, he says, "Stay with me," and Eret complies.

"Hiccup?" Eret addresses, as he crawls into bed.

"Yeah?"

"I thought if I could minimize the fear I felt, after facing death, I could convince you not to worry."

"That's stupid."

"It is," Eret sighs. He pulls the blankets over them both. "I'm tired of seeing you in so much pain. I wanted to help carry some of that weight."

"What a thoughtful gesture. Too bad it was executed so poorly."

Hiccup doesn't allow the pregnant pause to last longer than it has any right to.

"Eret, why did you save her? I feel like I ought to know. I mean, you don't just throw yourself into an icy pit of death for a stranger."

Green eyes search his, not only for assurance but solace, as well.

"I haven't made the best choices in life, Hiccup. Long before I worked for Drago, I made a series of awful decisions. I thought maybe this would help me redeem myself."

"By sacrificing yourself? Again, with theatrics."

"I didn't want to almost die, that accident just sort of happened. The more I say it out loud, the less sense it makes."

"Well, if you're going to be my boyfriend, you're gonna have to ease up on the heroic death wishes. That's my thing, not yours. Hello? Missing leg from the scourge of war over here? Quit trying to steal my thunder."

"Boyfriend?"

"Yeah, I guess. That's what we are, right?"

Eret's mouth hurts from smiling so wide. "Boyfriend," he repeats, just to be sure it's real.

\* \* \*

><p>It's not easy to describe how he feels when Hiccup falls asleep in his arms like this. Words don't do it any justice. All Eret knows is that he can't think of anyone else he'd rather lie with. The first sign of Hiccup's drowsy haze comes when he sighs, contently, and burrows into Eret's sturdy chest; hearty, melding shapes that reward him the prospect of safety.<p>

Their bodies lounge, flexed, stomachs tightly drawn together and Hiccup binds thin arms around Eret's waist, nose nestling into the divot under his neck. He burbles complaints under his breatheâ€"something about not being able to afford the luxury of napping, not when there's so much work he has left to doâ€"and then he dozes off. The grip around Eret's waist becomes less and less firm as Hiccup loses consciousness. Eret listens to Hiccup's even breaths; feels the rise and fall of his expanding chest.

Threading a hand through Hiccup's wind tousled hair, Eret whispers into the curve of his ear, his tone soothing, his words savory, delicate honeyed opals that drop from his lips. He knows Hiccup won't hear him but that doesn't stop him from uttering hushed endearments into hair that smells of sweat, pinecone, oil, and that same sweet fragrance that he can never quite place: the smell of Hiccup.

It's a unique, intoxicating aroma that he can't help but drown in. Words don't compare, not in the least, but he gives it his best shot.

"You're perfect."

\* \* \*

><p>I hope you like really corny, sappy fluff, because I fucking live for it. I'm sorry.<p>

## 7. Chapter 7

Six Months.

It's been six months since they've been dating and Hiccup has yet to tell his closest friends. Valka and Astrid know. Snotlout, Fishlegs, and the twins are oblivious to the affair so it's no surprise that they haven't commented on it. Eret doesn't take it personally. This is new for Hiccup. Being with a man is exciting and scary all at once so he'll let him take his time.

Six months just seems very long, is all.

"What's the holdup?" Eret asks.

They're in the forge and they're kissing. When Hiccup has an itch that only Eret can scratch, there isn't much room for discussion. The chief yanks his arm, pulling him away from whatever chore he's been assigned.

Eret groans in frustration but when he opens his mouth to verbalize his complaints, Hiccup covers him with hot, wet lips and suddenly, Eret doesn't care anymore. Hiccup slams him into the table and Eret howls in pain from the impact. The lankier body grinds into him, hastily, ridding him any chance to escape. Not that Eret minds.

Gods, it feels so good.

Hands are all over him, squeezing, pinching, tugging and pulling. Eret unhinges his jaw to allow a tongue to prod and tickle the roof of his mouth and, wow, the kiss gets filthy.

Really filthy.

Kisses are situated hard against Eret's cheekbone. Hiccup's docile caresses contrast outrageously in comparison to the rough, thick hands groping the younger man's bottom. Eret's silken hair had previously been tied back, as per usual, but it comes undone, unraveling to brush the shell of Hiccup's ear.

Stubble scratches alongside his neck when Hiccup bites soft skin, as if he were helping himself to ripe fruit; he half expects sweet nectar to roll down his throat when teeth sink into him.

"What holdup?" Hiccup counters, innocently placing a moist trail of kisses along Eret's jaw.

Eret sighs, from both irritation and approval.

"You know what I meanâ€”\_ooh\_â€”"

Damn it all to hell, he's found that sensitive spot right between the space where Eret's earlobe and jaw line connect.

"You can't keep making it harder for me to think. It's not fair."

That's it. He's had enough.

Grabbing Hiccup's waist, Eret spins them round, wrenching away from the countertop. They land on a stack of hayâ€”sometimes they can't make it to a soft surface in time and the hard, cold ground catches their fall instead.

Eret pins down slender lad with his weight and sure enough, his boyfriend is hard. With no desire to spare him any leniency, Eret shifts so their erections make contact. The abrasion traps breathe in his lungs and his eyes roll into the back of his head.

"You know what's not fair? Using your brute strength to toss me around like that. Have some consideration for once."

"Shut up," Eret growls. "You love being manhandled."

It's true, but Hiccup grumbles in protest. Eret lifts the hem of Hiccup's tunic and shoves it over his neck and shoulders.

Legs splayed, stomach bared, quavering in anticipation, limbs wilted

in submission, lips red and raw from delicious friction, hair tousled from earlier, when Eret jerked him by the hair and sucked on his Adam's apple: it's absolute perfection.

"You're talking about me not telling my friends about us, right?" Hiccup chokes, forcing out his words with utmost strength. Eret is kissing his chest, wrapping his lips around pert nipples. Hiccup can barely function when he's roused there. In fact, Eret is certain that he's seen Hiccup go cross eyed a few times when he's pinched and twirled them in painful, albeit delightful circles.

"Bloody, hell, Hiccup, you're gorgeous."

"I try."

"Dashing."

"I guess? It comes naturally, m-maybe. I don't know, who cares, just touch me some moreâ€"ohâ€"

"Look at you. You're so hard for me."

"I know," Hiccup begs, bucking his hips. "So do something about it."

Fingertips graze his abdomen at a leisurely pace. Hiccup whimpers when he cups his arousal. Eret bats his hand away. He takes his time, licking teasing stripes along Hiccup's stomach. A tongue darts out to nip at the hairs surrounding his belly button. His lips, teeth, and tongue taste every inch, everywhere but the protruding erection that's been ignored for so long.

Lengthy, deliberate strokes that aren't nearly enough drive Hiccup insane. Eret can tell because he digs his heel into the ground while clutching Eret's, hair. He rakes his fingers through tangled, black tresses.

Attempting to press Eret's head down, Hiccup grunts, guiding the former trapper to bring his mouth lower, towards his stiff groin. Eret just laughs, shrugs off the request, and instead uses his fingers to trace the shape of the prominent bulge.

"Do you remember the first time I went down on you?" Eret asks him, coyly. He looks up to peer at flushed desperation.

Hiccup bites his lip and says, "Yes."

"Remember how good it felt, Hiccup?"

"\_Yes\_."

"Your entire body shook when you came. You cried out so loudly, I thought the entire village would hear you."

"Yes, yes," Hiccup recites in a frantic mantra. "\_Please, please, Eret\_."

Eret's breathe ghosts over Hiccup's erection.

"Such a shame. I'd like to do it again, but you won't tell your

friends about us."

Eeret is more than pleased when he's graced with such a ferocious scowl.

\* \* \*

><p>"So you two are, like, together?"<p>

Snotlout asks this not out of repugnance but out of sheer curiosity.

"Yup."

Hiccup had summoned his friends to confirm this hearsay. They gather around a vacant table, their mouths ajar and their eyes widened with intrigue. Astrid rests in forehead in her palm, anticipating the worst. She prefers her role in this be a passive one.

"Are there any questions?" Hiccup asks, grimacing, twiddling his thumb.

"I have one," Ruffnut pipes up. The expression she bears isn't an uplifting one.

"Yes, Ruffnut?"

"Can I watch you guys make out?"

"Oh dear," Astrid mumbles.

"No," Hiccup snaps.

Eeret interjects, sparing his boyfriend the humiliation.

"Perhaps you could all ask questions that don't make us uncomfortable?"

"Why would it make you uncomfortable?" Tuffnut argues. "She's just asking if she can watch you kiss."

Hiccup inhales and exhales slowly and says, "How is thatâ€"how can you not see how that request is just the \_teeniest\_ bit inappropriate?"

"How do you guys, you know, do it?" Snotlout implores, hunching over. He curls a hand around his mouth as if it helps quiet his words.

"That's notâ€" "

"Do you rub your beards together? That's how it works, right?" Tuffnut adds.

"What? No, where did you hear that?"

"I might've humored them, a bit," Fishlegs speaks up, sheepishly.

"What led you to believe that was a good idea?"

Hiccup moans. He folds his arms against the tabletop and buries his face between them.

"That means you can't have kids, right?" Snotlout pries. "I mean, two guys can't really make a kid. What are you going to do without an heir?"

A silence hangs in the air and the moment stretches endlessly among them. Watching, Eret sees Hiccup cloak his emotions under an unsteady, shaky, self-depreciating grin. Rising up from his seat, Hiccup mutters, "I should go check on Toothless."

When Hiccup exits the hall, Astrid's nostrils flare and she aims an unruly glower towards Snotlout. Had she not managed to keep her wits about her, Eret was sure she'd leap from her to seat to tackle him to the floor and strangle him to death.

"What'd I say?" Snotlout protests, terrified.

"Are youâ€"are you that daft? Do you really have that little tact?" Eret says, incredulously.

"What's tact?"

"I'm going to go speak with him," Eret sighs, heading for the door.

"I see why you put it off for so long," Eret greets.

Hiccup didn't venture far, luckily. His boyfriend merely stands outside Meade Hall, staring at his boot while he scratches the soft spot behind his dragon's ears.

"It's not like I haven't been thinking about it ever since I started having feelings for you."

Extending his palm, Eret clasps his hand over Hiccup's. The lad doesn't object, quick to lace their fingers together. They're still, for some time, listening to Toothless's content purrs. Eret doesn't remove his hand, even as Hiccup continues to rub the rough patch of scales.

"I'd make a good father," Hiccup finally says, faintly.

"Of course you would."

"Then tell me I'm being selfish."

"Selfish, no. Unreasonable, yes."

"How am I being unreasonable?"

"Hiccup, six months ago you said you weren't sure if you wanted to start a family. Just now you're telling me you do."

"I don't! I mean, I do but I don't. I honestly don't know."

"Maybe it's alright to be unsure."

Hiccup shifts the weight from his good leg to his prosthetic one. He searches for a spot under Toothless's chin that results in a languid torrent of contented groan. Collapsing, convulsing, Toothless hits the ground and stretches his back. Eret can't help but smile and when he looks up, he sees Hiccup grinning, too.

"I'm not convinced that's a luxury I can haveâ€"being uncertain."

"Hiccup," Eret exhales evenly. "I know it's not an easy decision to make. You're still so young. You have time. The rest of your life, to be exact."

Eret watches Hiccup breathe out harshly rubbing his face with his hands. Eret presses close, hand squeezing Hiccup's shoulder.

"My dad always knew what he wanted and he never doubted who he was meant to be," Hiccup deflects, tersely. "That's part of what made him such a great leader."

"You aren't your father."

"No, but sometimes I wish I were because gods know how much easier life would be."

"You can't honestly think life would be easier if you were Stoick the Vast. He had \_you \_as a son."

"Okay, good point. I know how hard my dad's job was. Also, shut up."

Eret snorts, "You might've forgotten the first time I met your father. He was scolding you for disobeying his orders. I can only imagine what he must've put up with, having known you for some time."

"You sure know how to woo a guy."

For all the soaring optimism surrounding them, namely the laughter echoing from without Meade Hall, there's an undercurrent of reservation, a tremor of worry carried along by the docile spring breeze.

Older Viking couples both entering and exiting the hall in fixed clusters pass them by, bidding them friendly greetings. They watch the young males with barely hidden curiosity (not in any way disparaging) and knowing glances. Hiccup doesn't seem bothered to remove Eret's hand from his shoulder, not even in front of strangers.

It provides an odd reassurance that Hiccup might not even realize. They've been touching in public for a long while; playful nudges, heads resting on shoulders, light brushes of fingertips whenever they retrieve items from one another. It was quite the leap when Hiccup gave Eret a chaste kiss on the cheek in front of his mother, reddened all the while.

"Eret, what should I do?"

Eret cups Hiccup's cheek, sliding his hand down to the pulse in his



neck. It's soft, gentle, and intimate and when their eyes meet, he's engaged by the same scrutinizing expression that's queried his guidance on more than one occasion. Though they draw strength from one another and Eret values Hiccup's judgment just as well, he's not sure if he's as wise as fancies himself to be.

"You know I can't tell you that."

Hiccup breathes and sinks into the palm searching the steady throb beneath his skin.

"I don't know anything anymore," Hiccup groans, dramatically.

"That's just a wee bit dramatic, don't you think?"

Hiccup smiles, relishing in the comfort that their joined hands have to offer, and says, "Maybe a little."

"How about we go back inside and have some mead with your friends?"

"Are you sure?" Hiccup asks. "I can't guarantee you'll be relieved of their invasive questions."

"I can manage."

\* \* \*

><p>Later that night, they make love.<p>

Neither actually new it was coming, it just sort of happened. Hiccup gave Eret a goodnight kiss that carried on a bit longer than an endearing gesture generally would. Before either of the two men can speak, Eret soundlessly grabs Hiccup by the arm and guides him to Eret's home and then, not too shortly, Eret's bed.

Sloppy, frantic, and untimed kisses are swapped and when Hiccup nudges Eret's thighs apart, Eret complies, knowing exactly what it is Hiccup wants. What Hiccup does want, in this case, is to bite and mark Eret with a masterful collage of purples and reds; to suck the radiant pillar of his throat hard enough to leave an impression that won't go unnoticed by onlookers the next morning.

Starting at the top, working his way down, Hiccup kisses Eret until his lips tingle and tire from the hurried force. Eret is sure is a growl bubbles in the back of Hiccup's throat

"You're certainly riled up," Eret says, almost choking on his own saliva. Hopefully that wasn't noticeable. Not one of his more alluring moments. "I think I love it."

"Thanks," Hiccup chirps, nonchalantly, as though he isn't aware of the fingernails scraping down his boyfriend's sides or the impressive erection Eret is maintaining. "I figured I'd try that primal thing that Vikings are always talking about."

"\_Gods\_," Eret gasps.

Hiccup tugs impatiently at the hem of Eret's slacks and off they go.

No time is wasted as Hiccup takes the swollen cock into his mouth without so much a warning. Eret barely has time to breathe and process the pleasure bestowed upon him.

"Oh wow," Eret squeaks in a pitch higher than he thought was possible. Harsh and relentless pressure seizes his cock. The hollow of Hiccup's cheeks look perfect, as they often do, and he welcomes the girth with enthusiasm. It's as though Hiccup was starved for something thick and heavy to sit between his lips and Eret just happened to waltz in at the right time. With an audible slurping noise, Hiccup parts from Eret's cock and Eret son of Eret most certainly does not whine from this.

"I want it," Hiccup says suddenly.

"Want what," Eret croaks, dazed.

"You."

Eret brushes stray locks of hair from his boyfriend's eyes and then motions him to sit by his side, on the bed.

"You want me to what?"

"I want you inside me."

"Oh."

Forgetting what sexual intercourse was for a split second, sudden comprehension smacks him over the head and Eret's eyes widen as he repeats, "Oh."

"Is that okay?"

Eret places his hands over Hiccup's shoulders and rubs them, soothingly.

"Are you sure? I don't want to hurt you."

Shaking his head, Hiccup smiles and crawls into Eret's lap. As he gently pushes down on Eret's chest with the palm of his hands, lowering him onto his back, Hiccup replies, "You would never hurt me."

So just like that—"unprecedented"—slicked and smooth fingers are inside Hiccup and he rides them without an ounce of shame. For too long, Hiccup is prepared, coaxed and opened until he won't stop begging for more. If Eret thought the sight of his love panting over just a few fingers was breathtaking, he should have prepared himself for the moment in which Hiccup properly seated himself over Eret's elongated cock. A slow, drawn out breathe empties his lungs as the younger man takes in all of Eret's length.

When Hiccup shifts and builds an appropriate momentum to accommodate his inexperience, the two both hiss in unison. The stretch is unfamiliar and strange but not at all unwanted.

"\_Fuck\_," Hiccup cries out. He's impaled himself deeply enough to feel the thickness strike the spot inside him that he's only really explored a few times throughout puberty. "\_Yes\_," he adds, as his

prostate is grazed yet again and Eret laughs.

"That's the first time I've ever heard you cuss."

"It just feels so good."

"I know, love."

Gods, does it feel extraordinary; watching Hiccup bounce up and down in his lap, heavy lidded, jaw unhinged. Every time Hiccup surges himself harder onto Eret's now painfully erect cock, Eret can see the muscles in his belly tighten and coil. Hiccup squirms whenever his sensitive flesh is stimulated and he nearly wriggles away because he doesn't know if he can handle the intensity. Although it doesn't seem like Eret's the one performing most of the labor, aside from thrusting his hips to meet Hiccup's shaky and desperate rhythm, Hiccup showers him with praise.

How good his cock feels. How thick it is, how deep it hits him. How beautiful, how absolutely perfect Eret looks and feels. How long he's wanted to be fucked like this.

How much he loves him.

Eret takes Hiccup's hand into his and neither let go, even as Eret's knees buckle and his head sinks further into the mattress. It's undecided: should Eret be watching Hiccup descend rapidly onto his arousal while using a free hand to stroke himself or should he roll his eyes into the back of his head? There are so many incredible sensations all at once so what is he supposed to focus on? The unyielding, tight warmth pushing and pulling his erection is such a powerful impression and Eret can only cry out, mouth parting in helpless delight.

Somehow preserving a focused expression, Hiccup looms over his mate until their chests scrape with every rocking motion, pressing kisses and murmurs of affection against the nape of Eret's neck. Groaning and choking out his love for Hiccup, Eret approaches climax. Against the tumultuous force of their lovemaking, Eret comes, head reeling from the toe-curling, leg-shaking, and blurry orgasm. Not soon after his peak, Hiccup follows, spilling the hot trail of his release all over Eret's stomach.

He removes himself from Eret's grip, collapsing atop him, and winces slightly from the result of being filled. Eret hears him mumble something into the larger chest; something about the gods above. It's easier to hear Hiccup's rambles when he lifts his head from Eret's sweat soaked skin and says, "That was absolutely incredible."

As Hiccup buries himself closer, Eret wraps him into a tight embrace. The kiss they share isn't chaste nor is it fervent; it's slow and it provides some sort of comfort and reassurance.

"Everyone is going to notice my limp tomorrow," Hiccup ads, half-woefully.

"Good," Eret replies.

Hopefully, Berk does notice their chief's unfamiliar gait. It's a mark that won't wear off right away; a lingering aftermath that

proclaims that they fucked like animals.

"I'll get back at you next time. See how you like it," Hiccup grumbles.

Eret's only reply is a lazy "Mmm," as he strokes auburn hair from Hiccup's sticky forehead. Nothing is ever for certain set in stone but the body of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III was warm and solid against his steady heartbeat and Eret can still feel the imprint of Hiccup's tongue along his neck. He listens to rhythmic breathing and decides this is what matters most.

\* \* \*

><p>OK. Please don't kill me. Let me explain myself. I entered my last year of college around the time I was writing this fic last year. It ended up taking up all of my time and I was more focused on graduating than I was writing fanfics. I love writing fics but I had to think about my future and get ready for life after college. So for the last year, that's what I've been so busy with and that's why I didn't have time to finish this story. After I graduated school, I got a job! Yay! So then my job took up all my time! But I decided one day to just relax and write a bit so I wrote the last chapter to this fic.<p>

I really hope you all enjoyed it and please don't be sad that I ended this fic because I'll write and draw more Eretcup in the future. Feel free to point out any typos. I'm an exhausted full time freelance artist so I can easily overlook mistakes..

End  
file.